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Through the lens of mobility studies, this dissertation reexamines contemporary and historical critical assumptions about the genre of late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century regionalism. Many regionalist scholars such as Hamlin Garland, Richard Brodhead, and Amy Kaplan argue for this literature's idolatry of backwards, homogeneous, and culturally sluggish spaces. However, through analysis of regional characters' mobility in texts by Sarah Orne Jewett, Helen Hunt Jackson, Sarah Barnwell Elliott, and Sui Sin Far, I make three major claims that refute this mindset. First, I argue that studying mobility in these texts generates new readings of the novels' interest in social reform. Critics such as Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse argue that regionalist texts critique social injustices by inviting privileged readers to feel for marginalized groups. However, rather than always reading the marginalized figures as passive recipients of readers' pity, I argue that these characters use their mobility to remove themselves from unjust situations, thus themselves becoming agents of social change. Secondly, I assert that the characters' movements bring new cultures into towns, mobilize existing cultures, and destabilize geographic boundaries, thus making regional spaces more about progress and cultural fluidity than demographic, spatial, and temporal fixity. Finally, this project builds on the concept of the global region, arguing that examples of mobility in these texts show how characters can simultaneously maintain local identities invested in reforming local communities and an increasing global worldview.

My dissertation begins with analysis of Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs* in which I illustrate how the narrator uses her mobility to bond with the local community. These interactions continually alter her impression of the region, establishing it as a heterogeneous space with permeable geographic boundaries. While Jewett's novel focuses on how mobility unites communities, my work with Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona* demonstrates how movement generates agency for marginalized groups left out of dominant communities. Ramona's many relocations call for Native sovereignty while her eventual immigration to Mexico creates a transnational identity that resists regionalism's ostensible desire to locate identities in set regions. I then turn to Sarah Barnwell Elliott's *The Durket Sperret*, arguing that the heroine's movements throughout her Appalachian region undermine myths about the region's uniform poverty and instead reveal a diverse class system that subverts critical assumptions about regionalism's desire for cultural homogeneity and fixed (economic) boundaries. Finally, I assert that Sui Sin Far's *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* further evidences regionalism's interest in demographic heterogeneity and cultural multiplicity when her characters use localized movement to create complex cultural identities that a sinophobic America wanted to deny. In all of the texts examined, assumptions about the genre's interest in nostalgia, geographic fixity, and cultural authenticity dissolve as the characters use their movement to connect with local cultures and simultaneously become citizens of the world.

"THE PATH SHE HAD CHOSEN": MOBILITY IN WORKS BY AMERICAN  
WOMEN REGIONALISTS FROM THE LATE NINETEENTH AND  
EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

by

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In the transportation exhibit of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, fairgoers delighted in the broad examples of land and oceanic travel. Objects on display consisted of Native canoes, Italian gondolas, Japanese warships, replicas of the Campania and Lucania, current transatlantic steamers, as well as a Brazilian boat built out of logs and capable of carrying nearly five tons of sugar ("Notes" 69.14). Viewers also found various models of locomotives in which "no home luxury is wanting," as well as farm wagons, one-seated two-wheelers, a Mexican ox-cart, and a jirikisha of Japan that looked like a "somewhat enlarged baby carriage" (Johnson 12). Commemorating the four-hundred-year anniversary of Columbus's arrival in the Americas, the fair itself was a testament to travel. Aside from celebrating past voyages, the exposition reveled in the future of transportation by offering an elevator in the Transportation Building as well as a high-tech system of canals and lagoons that took people to various buildings and exhibits ("The World's Columbian Exhibition," "Notes" 69.5) Even more than demonstrating the marvels of technology, the fair illustrated society's need for movement, the historic development of transportation as a socially constructed force, as well as the cultural

ramifications of human mobility. Its extensive treatment of transportation showed that mobility had captured the interest of nineteenth-century Americans.

While few might associate regionalist writing with this celebration of technology, modernity, and cosmopolitanism, certain nineteenth-century female regionalists also responded to their era's love affair with human movement; like the Columbian Exposition, they looked towards the future, anticipating increasingly global movement patterns. Although regionalist writers operated from a specific cultural space and historic moment, many addressed twenty-first century causes of human migration, such as the need to work, the promise of economic betterment, the aggression of nation-states that deem specific populations undesirable, and movement for leisure (Appadurai 44). They foresaw a "manifesto" that Stephen Greenblatt would issue over one hundred years later that called for a study of how mobility shapes history, identity, and language in an age of "colonization, exile, emigration, wandering, contamination... longing, and restlessness" (2). These women writers demonstrated the value of writing about one's region in a world that was rapidly becoming less focused on regions as fixed, map-able spaces.

Critics have not ordinarily connected regionalist literature with mobility. To the contrary, Jean Carol Griffith argues that "in many works by nineteenth-century regionalists most characters stay in place, both geographically and socially" (13). Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse argue that "characters in regional fiction are rooted; they don't leave home in search of their identity" (*American Women* xvii). While regionalist writing does imply a rooted connection to space, I argue that writers imagine local places as sites of great mobility. Instead of being oppositional, mobility and regionalism are



mutually reinforcing literary tools that help regionalist works such as Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896), Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona* (1884), Sarah Barnwell Elliott's *The Durket Sperret* (1898), and Sui Sin Far's *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* (1912) issue social critique. I argue that an assessment of mobility in regionalist literature demonstrates how the aforementioned texts problematize such issues as community belonging, social injustice, as well as rigid racial, class, and ethnic hierarchies.

Aside from better understanding regionalism's cultural work, studying mobility within the genre helps us reassess monolithic assumptions about this type of literature, starting with the basic myth that mobility has no place in regionalist texts. Assessing mobility in regionalist literature also undermines the genre's supposed resistance to early twentieth-century as well as modern-day globalism. Finally, studying mobility in regionalist literature destabilizes its ostensible nostalgia for finite and bounded geopolitical spaces. *The Path She Had Chosen* ultimately adds to existing debates about regionalism's conventions, arguing that we cannot fully comprehend these patterns without a consideration of mobility.

The current critical conversation surrounding mobility in local color literature is sparse. Marilyn Wesley argues that mobility in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* aids in the characters' development. Scholars such as Stephanie C. Palmer, Tom Lutz, Judith Fetterley, and Marjorie Pryse study exogenous narrators moving into regions; while this analysis is useful, we must consider the ways that characters move not just into regions, but also within, throughout, and away from these spaces, simultaneously occupying the position of insider and outsider. For example, in Jewett's text, maneuvering through

spaces with community members helps the narrator transition from an outsider into someone accepted as a native inhabitant. *Ramona* shows that the protagonist's decision to move away from the Anglo interlopers reinforces her membership within the Native community. In Elliott's text, Hannah's upper-class breeding and "Durket Sperret" grant her an insider's status in Sewanee even when she works as a lower-class servant. Movement in some of Sin Far's stories helps whites outside the Chinese community become members and Chinese immigrants integrate into American society. With characters that continually inhabit multiple geographic spaces, all of these texts go beyond the trope of the outsider entering a new region.

This multifaceted mobility reshapes my definition of regionalism to include texts about people who come in contact with regional communities, regardless of their origin or place of residency. Fetterley and Pryse define regionalism as texts that present the "regional experience from within" (*American Women* xii). While they might mean that one has to identify personally with the region to narrate a regionalist text, this local identification can limit regional narrators to those who physically occupy space *within* the region. However, because many of the aforementioned characters transgress boundaries of belonging, they defy Fetterley and Pryse's definition. Additionally, by insisting that regionalist writing must be created from "within," we deny populations in flux the ability to write about the local spaces they may temporarily inhabit. At the height of regionalism's popularity, many groups of people were on the move; rural inhabitants streamed into large cities for factory work, African Americans migrated north to escape post-Reconstruction racism, while European immigrants sought homes in the mid-West

(Griffith 12). These mobile populations made it difficult to determine who was or was not a regional insider.

In short, limiting regionalism to a genre that relies on insiders negates the possibility of works in which local and nonlocal characters move into, within, and away from regional spaces. To understand how the genre articulates mobility as a social construct, we need to make it more inclusive, considering the perspective of both fixed and unfixed narrators. In this expanded version of regionalism, the community still serves as the main reference point, but it functions to measure rather than reinforce the transgression of boundaries. Ultimately, my version of regionalism calls for a more flexible definition that considers multiple forms of movement in varied directions. While I recognize that many contemporary scholars of the genre prefer the words "regionalism" to "local color" and "regional" to "local," I want to distance myself from verbal distinctions that privilege the authenticity of an inside narrator. However, I also use the terms interchangeably to remind us that while regions can be permeable and unfixed, they are still linked to specific geographic locations that remain distinct from more general conceptions of space and place. In my conclusion, I expand on why physical location matters for a genre that has become increasingly global; but for now, it is important to note that using "local" as a synonym for "regional" implies a physical connection to the space through which regional characters move.<sup>i</sup>

My project speaks to Philip Joseph's *American Literary Regionalism in a Global Age* in which he argues that regionalism (both in terms of literary spaces and real geopolitical spaces) must consider the mutual dependence of local and global

communities, thus allowing narrators simultaneously to "write from within" and participate in a larger, external community. Joseph argues, "regionalism speaks most pertinently to us when it recognizes a dynamic, mutually informing relationship between members of a locality on the one hand and the institutions and cultures of a globalized world on the other" (*American* 7). His analysis shows how distinctions between local color and regional literature collapse when multiple spatialized forces interact. My research takes his analysis further by asking, what happens when communal and global citizenry are not absolutes? Instead of displaying localized and globalized identities as fixed, the characters I analyze constantly renegotiate their communal belonging, often blurring the lines between membership within a local community and a larger world. Specifically, *The Country of the Pointed Firs's* narrator does not immediately belong in Dunnet Landing; she gains membership by traveling through the region with its inhabitants. In Jackson's novel, Ramona flees various local communities and assumes a more global identity because her status as racial outsider prevents her from ever belonging in an Anglo-dominated world. Elliott's *The Durket Sperret* shows how Hannah forgoes membership in the local Cove when she migrates as a servant to the semi-urban, semi-cosmopolitan Sewanee. Belonging on a national level becomes difficult for Sui Sin Far's characters who must use their localized mobility to create an identity beyond that of foreign Other. In short, my dissertation asks what happens when mobility dissolves fixed binaries between the global and the local, permitting characters to operate simultaneously in both worlds.

## Why Mobility

Eudora Welty once noted that "fiction depends for its life on place. Location is the crossroads of circumstance, the proving ground of 'What happened? Who's here? Who's coming?' — and that is the heart's field" (118). For Welty, location, place, and setting are vital elements of fiction. More subtly, she also argues for the importance of mobility in literature. For her, place generates questions about who is moving through these spatial "crossroads." Foreshadowing Michel Certeau's distinction between place and space, Welty sees setting as significant, but only as the backdrop for characters' interactions. When those interactions occur, setting becomes a discursive space and thus, a driving force for literary creation. Likewise, Certeau believes that place is simply "elements [that] are distributed in relationships of coexistence" (117). It consists of multiple objects in a specific area. However, when movement occurs, place turns into space, or a site where we witness the "intersections of mobile elements" (Certeau 117). Basically, mobility helps fictional settings evolve from scenery into spaces that shape how we perceive ourselves, interact with others, conceptualize our surroundings, and create "spatial stories" (Cresswell and Merriman 5).

To understand how these stories shape us, we must first comprehend how we move through locations and what mobility is. On a basic level, mobility is "physical movement through space: boarding a plane, venturing on a ship, climbing onto the back of a wagon, crowding into a coach, mounting on horseback, or simply setting one foot in front of the other and walking" (Greenblatt 250). In the texts of *The Path She Had Chosen*, movement occurs in many different forms, all relating to the body's locomotion

from point A to point B. For example, mobility in Jewett's novel can be as limited in distance as walking someone to the edge of a yard; or, characters can travel further into the mainland or to surrounding islands. Mobility occurs on the interregional level for Jewett's narrator when she travels to Dunnet Landing from outside and on an international level when we hear about the characters' experiences with the shipping industry. When the narrator listens to stories about the characters' sea travel, she experiences mobility by proxy, simply by sharing in someone's narrative of movement. In addition to occurring on multiple levels, mobility in Jewett's novel includes multiple types of transportation, from foot travel, to sailing by boat, to land travel by wagon.

Contrary to Jewett's novel, which focuses primarily on local circulation, Jackson's novel underscores examples of interregional and international travel. However, distinguishing what exactly constitutes interregional travel becomes slightly problematic; regions become trans-spatial as the lines between local cultures blur and reconstitute themselves. Similar to Jewett's novel a great deal of movement occurs on foot, but Jackson's characters also journey on horseback. Elliott's characters move primarily on foot. As in Jackson's novel, it becomes difficult to discern the difference between regional and interregional movement. If we interpret the urban Sewanee and the rural Cove as separate regions, Hannah's spatial maneuverings become interregional. Rather than showing the movement of free agents, Sui Sin Far's stories differ from the other texts by exposing the psychological damage of impeded mobility. Many of Sui Sin Far's stories respond to the unjust 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act which limited the number of Chinese immigrants who could enter the U.S. Stories such as "In the Land of the Free"

and "The Smuggling of Tie Co" depict characters who never receive the chance to develop the bicultural identity that the globe-trotting Sui Sin Far (Edith Maude Eaton) espouses. Mobility at the local level becomes transgressive when Sui Sin Far's characters use their movement to counter a sinophobic society's racial prejudices. In terms of physical transportation, the characters in Sui Sin Far's collection maneuver through space by foot and by sea.

Mobility studies are not just about types of movement, but also the situations that relate to movement as Jeffrey Cohen and Ibrahim Sirkeci argue in *Cultures of Migration*. While they focus mainly on examples of migration, Cohen and Sirkeci consider the act as part of a larger framework of global mobility:

Migration is not a solitary process. It isn't just about a mover and where he or she goes. Migration is about security and escaping dangerous situations. It is about the sending households that are homes to migrants and about the communities where those households are found. Migration is local and follows individual movers to internal destinations. It is also about international flow and global processes. We must look beyond the present and the person to understand the history and sociocultural setting of the mover. (2)

As Cohen and Sirkeci illustrate, a single individual's transitions through space have resounding ramifications for the home communities, places of settlement, and global migration patterns. Thus, mobility studies must always consider the larger cultural framework in which movement occurs (Cohen and Sirkeci 10).

Mobility is often synonymous with travel in local color literature. Historically, movement in this genre involves a lost traveler forced to interact with locals as a result of some traveling mishap (Palmer 3). These interactions facilitate communication between

the insider and the outsider, while generating questions about how such an urban figure can belong in a small town community (Palmer 4). However, mobility does not equal travel and travel writing differs substantially from regionalist texts. Although both genres share similarities such as opening publication venues for women writers, describing the landscape, and recording the daily practices of a cultural group (Schriber 4), regionalist works do not always participate in travel writing's autobiographical impetus (Siegel 7). Travel narratives also imply the traversing of large distances while I am interested in all ranges of mobility, from the local to the international.

Additionally, travel narratives usually guide visitors on how to approach a new culture. Mary Schriber notes that such narratives helped fellow travelers by providing, "itineraries, descriptions of modes of transportation, conventional responses to sacralized sites and monuments, [and] complaints about guides" (4). "How to" travel guides become less useful when studying the movement of characters that are already native to their region as well as the journeys of characters that leave under duress. Finally, travel guides often assume that regions are already set places. Through the study of mobility, we see that regions, like human movement, are constantly in states of flux.

I also hesitate to link mobility with travel because of the latter's association with the upper-class privilege of vacationing. Vacationing by no means always symbolizes an unethical power dynamic in which tourists exploit or commodify the visited locale. Nor is travel inherently problematic simply because it designates wealth and luxury. However, as critics such as Richard Brodhead and Amy Kaplan note, travel can be problematic in regionalism because of the genre's reputation for providing readers with a form of



"literary tourism" (Kaplan, "Nation, Region, and Empire" 252).<sup>ii</sup> According to Kaplan, nineteenth-century regionalism offered upper-class, urban, educated readers the opportunity to "tour" unfamiliar, rural, regions without having to leave home. Perhaps real travel would have eliminated stereotypes about regions that labeled these non-urban communities as alternatives to the chaos of rapid industrialization and urbanization ("Nation, Region, and Empire" 252). Rather than experience these regions, literary tourists formed monolithic ideals about regional communities based on what they read. Furthermore, this literary tourism associated with vacationing substantiates dichotomies of the gazer (the tourist) and the gazed upon (the locals), a distinction that is problematic for characters whose movements position them both within and outside the local community.

I do not assume that travelers always feel superior to the regional spaces they visit, but when they do, movement becomes entwined with power-laden binaries. Mobility is inherently political and determines "social value, cultural purchase, and discriminatory power" (Simpson xiv). In *The Path She Had Chosen*'s texts, mobility is never simply movement; each character's journey through regional spaces becomes a confrontation with stratifying forces that dictate who can move, who moves where, and who has the power to refuse movement.

For example, in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, the narrator's privileged status as honorary member of the Bowden clan allows her to march with Mrs. Blackett and Mrs. Todd during the family processional. Race and ethnicity become significant determinants of mobility in *Ramona* when the heroine has to fight to move on terms other than those

dictated by the encroaching Anglo settlers. Ramona's mixed-race background simultaneously limits her mobility and provides her with the impetus to escape Anglo-assimilation. In Elliott's *The Durket Sperret*, Hannah moves because of and despite her class status, simultaneously perpetuating and challenging class categories. In Sui Sin Far's *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*, ethnicity complicates movement into the U.S. for Chinese immigrants but simultaneously enables Mrs. Spring Fragrance's multiethnic identity. Every text in this study illustrates how mobility involves more than charting one's movement through physical space; it involves mapping one's passage through power-laden *social* spaces as well.

### **Why These Authors**

Jewett, Jackson, Elliott, and Sui Sin Far's texts offer a broad range of regional perspectives, encompassing areas such as New England's coastal waters, California's ever-shrinking Native lands, Appalachia's Cumberland Mountains, and San Francisco's Chinatown. Such coverage shows mobility's affect on regional spaces across the country. Additionally, these authors all wrote during a period of history in which the movement of people and things reached new heights. During this time, people moved in new ways and the railroad's development connected previously isolated regions. According to historian Robert Wiebe, "the primary significance of America's new railroad complex lay not in the dramatic connections between New York and San Francisco, but in the access a Kewanee, Illinois, or an Aberdeen, South Dakota, enjoyed to the rest of the nation, and

the nation to it" (47). The railroad brought small towns onto the map just as regionalism brought more isolated regions to the attention of the literary world.

The bulk of *The Path She Had Chosen* focuses on Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona*, and Sarah Barnwell Elliott's *The Durket Sperret*. These texts demonstrate the late nineteenth century's "unparalleled physical mobility" and articulate what it meant to be a female journeying through different spaces in this age (Foote, *Regional* 5). The final chapter concludes with the later local color work, Sui Sin Far's *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* which shows how the early twentieth century not only brought increased opportunities for physical mobility, but also limited them through strict immigration policies for Chinese Americans. Even though these works represent different historical moments, all deal with the unique conditions of the mobile female.

As Philip Joseph notes, the body is the main way that we "send and receive messages" about our spatial surroundings (*American* 2). I limit my study to women authors who write about female characters based on the assumption that shared bodily experiences (inhabiting female bodies) creates allied perspectives about moving through space. While race and class also shape how we move, gender's relationship to mobility merits attention because of women's historical association "with sessility [rather] than with mobility, with fixity [rather] than with mobility or physical movement, [and] with home rather than the road" (Roberson, "American" 217). Placing texts about female travelers in conversation means we can better understand how such gendered historical

associations shape “the traumas, the costs, and the rewards of movement, migration, and displacement” for women (Roberson, *Women* 4).

Aside from writing about characters with gendered patterns of movement, the writers of this project also participate in a genre which people frequently attributed to female authors. While not all regionalists were women, the genre did appeal to female writers because like the domestic novel, it allowed women to write about familiar spaces (Donovan, *SOJ* 7). Regionalism became an acceptable way for women to explore issues of their lives such as female companionship, local interactions, and the limitations and joys of domesticity. The genre not only affirmed feminine interests, it also enabled women to challenge assumptions about their gender. From 1880 to 1920, regionalism debated the “Woman Question,” reflecting concerns about what happened when women left home to seek careers and education (Ammons and Rohy xviii). All of the writers in this project create powerful female characters that become agents of their own mobility. Some of these characters, such as Hannah in *The Durket Sperret*, ultimately reject domesticity in favor of economic independence. Others, such as Jackson's Ramona and some of Sui Sin Far's, characters use their mobility to seek domesticity. Mrs. Todd in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* meshes the domestic and the outside world when she travels to find the herbal remedies that allow her to be the community's caretaker. In writing about issues that both empowered and disabled female agency, as well as combined domestic and public spaces, women regionalists wrote “the geography of their gender” as much as they wrote the geography of regional spaces (Tichi 598).

Conversely, male-authored local color texts frequently neglected the complexities of the mobile female. Works from authors such as Charles Chesnutt, Mark Twain, and Hamlin Garland show women with either limited or nonexistent mobility. Charles Chesnutt's "Po' Sandy" (1888), initially seems to empower the female slave, Tenie, as someone who resists the control slave owners' exerted over their slaves' mobility. In this story, Sandy, another slave, asks Tenie to turn him into something stationary such as a tree so that he no longer has to be lent out to other farms. Tenie uses her conjuring abilities to counteract the slave owner's control of Sandy's mobility. However, when her owner sends her to another plantation twenty miles away, we see that Tenie cannot control her own mobility in this oppressive system. During her absence, Sandy's owner cuts down the Sandy tree, undoing any agency Tenie may have demonstrated by helping Sandy stay in one place.

Aside from failing to grant women the power to move, some regionalist texts such as *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885) represent women as impediments to male mobility or as figures who do not register in a world that associates mobility with masculinity. Huck's narrative begins with how the Widow Douglass tries to "sivilize," him, limiting his rebellious mobility by keeping him "in the house all the time" (2). He yearns to move freely, saying, "all I wanted was to go somewheres; all I wanted was a change" (3). Huck's desire to escape from the Widow's "limitations and confinement" ultimately drives him westward (Pennell 1). When women in *Huck Finn* are not limiting male mobility, they are absent from the mobile sphere. Melissa McFarland Pennell observes that "the biggest contrast between men and women in the novel involves

mobility" (1). Pennell notes that many of the novel's males "make significant journeys, while others are free to come and go in the local areas in which they live. Female characters, in contrast are typically bound by place" (1). Being "bound by place" means that female figures play only minimal roles in a novel that focuses on the theme of mobility.

Like Chesnutt's "Po' Sandy," and Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Hamlin Garland's *Main-Travelled Roads*, also fails to address female mobility. The collection's first story, "A Branch Road," tells of Will Hannan's love for Agnes Dingman. When Will finds out that Agnes is to marry another man, he moves West "to get away" (just like Huck) (49). Years later, he returns to find that Agnes's husband is abusive, causing her to become "worn and wasted" (66). Will's intentions are good when he offers to take Agnes away from her dismal life, but his proposal becomes paternalistic when he insists that she will only survive under his wing. He notes, "she was a dying woman unless she had rest and tender care" (76). Agnes is unwilling to abandon her dreadful existence saying, "we've got to bear it" (79). Only after Will pressures her and offers an ultimatum does he "open a door for her," both literally and figuratively, in escorting her to a new life (84).

While Agnes's decision to leave an unhappy situation is admirable, Will's treatment of her makes the decision problematic. The story ends with the sensation that Agnes is at best cajoled and at worse, manipulated into leaving. References to Will's "hypnotic, dominating...voice and eyes," leave readers with the unsettled feeling that he might be as controlling as her current husband (81). Thus, while she agrees to move in

hopes of a better existence, she does not seem to gain any agency in this act. She simply trades one dominating male for another.

"Mrs. Ripley's Trip" is another story from the revised 1922 version of Garland's *Main-Travelled Roads* that arguably addresses female mobility more positively. Here, Mrs. Ripley asserts, "I ain't been away t' stay overnight for thirteen years in this house..." and concludes that she has the right to visit family in "Yaark State" (306). The story paints Mrs. Ripley as a determined woman who saved diligently for a well-earned "play spell" in New York (311). Initially, she resembles Jewett, Jackson, Elliott, and Sui Sin Far's many characters who leave home to pursue careers, leisurely travel, freedom from oppressive forces, financial stability, or a cultural identity. Yet, Garland's story takes an unexpected narrative turn when it flashes forward to Mrs. Ripley's homecoming immediately after her departure. Upon returning, we briefly hear how Mrs. Ripley saw "a pile o' this world" but was anxious to return home (279). The return itself is not problematic. Mrs. Ripley shows that women do not have to abandon domesticity to be mobile agents. The story becomes unsettling when it refuses to narrate Mrs. Ripley's trip, despite its title. It is as if Mrs. Ripley's adventures do not merit narration and the only place she can receive the narrator's attention is in the home.

Susan Stanford Friedman argues that "from an earlier emphasis on silence and invisibility, feminism has moved to a concern with location -- the geopolitics of identity within differing communal spaces of being and becoming" (*Mappings* 3). However, nineteenth-century male regionalist writers' treatment of female mobility shows feminist critics might not want to make this shift absolute. Based on how Chesnutt, Twain, and

Garland absent female characters from a mobile world, women still struggle against "silence and invisibility" for a mobile, geopolitical identity. When these male writers make women's mobility invisible, they effectively impede the female characters' development of a spatialized identity with "differing communal spaces of being and becoming." Conversely, Jewett, Jackson, Elliott, and Sui Sin Far all create mobile female characters that who use their movement to combat a patriarchal system that wants to silence their subjectivity. To effect their challenge, they employ what Friedman calls a "locational approach to feminism" (*Mappings* 5). This type of feminism argues that identities are never set, but rather dependent on the places, spaces, and cultures people inhabit and move through. All of their texts' protagonists use movement to negotiate their place in the world.

For these women regionalists, a trans-spatial subjectivity became the solution to a historic moment that made an individual identity difficult to distinguish. While I argue that later local color works (such as Sui Sin Far's) restate the significance of individualism, earlier regionalists wrote during a time when society questioned the individual's ability to enact social change as well as how to identify the subject within an increasingly congested communal space. Robert Wiebe argues that in the late nineteenth century, individuals started to realize the power of collective bargaining, joining groups to protest monopolies, conglomerations, and hegemonic forces (78). While these forces successfully made the dominant order fear that "in a democratic society the people might rule" (Wiebe 77), they also questioned the individual's power outside of the larger collective.



Additionally, the individual became more difficult to identify with the decline of cultural isolation. Prior to this period, individuals identified themselves by the work they did in their specific community. However, as rural communities became more industrial, it became difficult to distinguish the individualized work that went into mass-produced goods. Additionally, lines distinguishing communal membership dissolved when rural regions bled into urban spheres (Wiebe 133). However, mobile figures in *The Path She Had Chosen's* texts show that at times, a localized, communal identity can reinforce an individual identity; at other times, communal and individual identities conflict, and mobility makes it possible for characters to challenge identities based solely on communal affiliation.

In addition to rectifying this uncertainty about individualism, the protagonists' mobile, fluid identities also address the recent "'crisis' of values" that Rosi Braidotti argues feminism has experienced (3). In *Nomadic Subjects*, Braidotti observes that current feminist critics are unsure about how to represent gender; many debate whether female subjectivity is an act of performance, an embodied identity, or a "political fiction" (3). Braidotti regards itinerancy as positive rather than detrimental; it means that one has the agency to constantly re-create an identity rather than forcing it into existing gender roles. For the mobile characters in many local color works, this nomadism means one can identify with her community, but does not necessarily have to stay tied to this identity. Nomadism essentially allows for interior growth as well as identities that resist fixity.

Literal nomadism becomes a metaphor for unfixed identities when *The Country of the Pointed Firs's* narrator uses movement to sustain dual identities as a professional

writer and a community member. Resistance to fixed identities helps Jackson's Ramona survive as a mixed-race Scottish Native American who later marries a Mexican. A more flexible concept of identity allows Elliott's Hannah to exist as both lower-class Coveite and upper-class inhabitant of town when she earns the affection of an aristocratic university student. Even in Sui Sin Far's texts, when characters identify with localized communities through small-scale mobility, they frequently resist monolithic, unified identities by refusing assimilation into the dominant society.

Aside from resisting fixity, the nomadic identity allows for the development of "intensive interconnectedness" with others (Braidotti 5). As the characters move through space (even at the local level) they connect with people and places that advance their journeys. These multiple affiliations facilitate the refutation of a single subjectivity; instead, the characters use movement to identify with multiple people, places, and things (Roberson, "American" 223).

As the women writers of this project problematize the idea of static identities, they also use movement to help their characters become agents of their destinies. In defining agency, I reference Lois McNay, who argues that agency facilitates the negotiation of action in the midst of dominant forces (16). For the characters in my first three chapters, agency means acting within and often despite mobility-limiting hierarchies of privilege. In Sui Sin Far's stories, agency becomes less about inserting one's self into a dominant system and more about the "new powers, new insights, skills, and identities," that female characters gain from being mobile (Roberson, "American" 223). However, not all female-authored narratives link movement with agency or protest

women's lack of agency. To assume that mobility always results in agency or even that all mobile women want agency means missing the broad scope of desires that instigate movement (Roberson, "American" 215). While Jewett, Jackson, Elliott, and Sui Sin Far's female characters become empowered by maneuvering through space, they are not necessarily representative of all mobile women's experiences. Also, while Wendy Parkins asserts that "industrialization, urbanization, and increasing democratization" allowed women more agency (if desired) to move outside of traditional domestic roles, not every woman felt the need to use newly gained agency to move away from home (2).

In some cases, agency does not mean leaving home, but rather traveling towards a space of domestic stability free from the outside world's troubles. Agency can also translate into asserting the desire to stay put. Often, characters that want to return home or stay in the home are not anti-feminist, but rather expressing a universal longing for comfort in the midst of a chaotic external environment. *The Country of the Pointed Fir's* narrator recognizes this desire in Joanna's retreat from society. She feels that everyone needs to find a place of solitude, saying, "we are each the uncompanioned hermit and recluse of an hour or a day; we understand our fellows of the cell to whatever age of history they may belong" (82). Additionally, in Jewett's novel home becomes the anticipated final destination after a long sea voyage. Rather than avoid home, sea captains and fishermen return to loved ones who wait with "large and brave and patient traits" (48). In Jackson's novel, Ramona and Alessandro journey not to leave home, but rather to find a peaceful place where their family can live free from encroaching American settlers. Sui Sin Far's "In the Land of the Free" shows how Lae Choo only wants to return from

China and live with her husband and baby. However, she cannot do so when Customs officials prevent her Chinese baby from entering U.S. territory. For her, an unjust system impedes her son's mobility, making the home a desired but unachievable goal.

In "The Literature of Impoverishment," Ann Douglas Wood argues that "the home figures as a warm and nourishing nest, but a strangely mobile one" for Victorian sentimentalist writers (20). She claims that during this literary era, home became more of a concept that women could create through the "spirit" of a "self-sacrificing yet cheery" personality, regardless of the physical space inhabited (20). Wood further asserts that this concept of the mobile home diminished for post-sentimentalism regionalists. Wood argues that for Jewett:

the home is a house, and the house has become a thing, both perishable and menacing. Home is a bricklike prison and a frail refuge from a world more frightening than any prison. Home is no longer unlocalized, no longer simply one of the magical little lady's portable tricks, but a *fact*. "Local" color is very local, indeed. (21)

However, I do not see such fixity of home in local color works. In the texts I explore, female characters can move towards home, journey away from home, be impeded from returning home or simply take their "home" with them as a mobile concept of comfort and security. Thus, Wood's claim about home as a mobile concept is applicable to regionalists as well as Victorians.

Acting or moving within the regional framework that valued the home becomes especially important not just for characters, but for writers who found literary "homes" working as professional authors within exclusive discourses. Regionalism not only gave

women writers a venue to explore issues related to femininity, it also enabled them to enter the masculine genre of realism. Critics assert that Realism is not known for its inclusiveness. According to Eric Sundquist, “those in power (say, white urban males) have been more often judged ‘realists,’ while those removed from the seats of power (say, Midwesterners, blacks, immigrants, or women) have been categorized as regionalists” (509). Yet simply by “moving” within exclusive realist publications such as *The Century*, *Harper’s Magazine*, and *The Atlantic*, regionalists asserted their membership within this genre. Marjorie Pryse argues that “writing in the regionalist mode created for the authors of these texts a rhetorical space 'within' those excluding discourses” of gender, race, and class (“Reading Regionalism” 50). She means that while regionalist writers destabilized hierarchies of privilege in their texts, they also undermined literary hierarchies by being published alongside other realists.

Some contemporary critics argue that even though regionalism gave women a space for authorship, these authors were not necessarily concerned with the welfare of the larger world. Amy Kaplan believes that by focusing on isolated regional spaces, the genre ignores “social conflicts of class, race, and gender made contiguous by urban life” (“Nation, Region, and Empire” 251). Similarly, Wood argues that despite the literary opportunities that regionalism opened up for professional women writers, the genre “is not revolutionary, nor even subversive” (32). For her, regionalists were more interested in local gossip than “larger” world issues such as race, gender, and class (32).

I disagree, aligning myself with scholars such as Fetterley and Pryse who argue for the genre’s revolutionary ability to give women a place for professional authorship

and to issue social critique. Regionalists wrote during a time when (mostly privileged) women increasingly became active in social reform. During the nineteenth century, women joined women's clubs, temperance movements, anti-lynching crusades and suffrage movements, demanding an unprecedented political voice (Ammons, *Conflicting* 6). Women regionalists also had the support of the *Atlantic* editor, William Dean Howells, to make their texts more ethically involved in their surrounding communities. According to Paul Petrie, "the keystone of W.D. Howells's nascent literary vision...was an increasingly explicit conception of literary fiction as an ethically purposeful vehicle for fostering social understanding and cohesion in an age of societal fragmentation" (*Conscience* 100). With Howells's blessing, women regionalists raised awareness about how dominant culture created and maintained power hierarchies based on gender, race, class, ethnicity, and nationality (Pryse, "Reading Regionalism" 50).

Regarding social critique, my Jewett chapter speaks to how a community constructs itself, arguing that mobility sustains rather than destabilizes a group's identity and that one can achieve communal belonging by moving with existing residents. This argument contradicts the assumption that people have to exist in fixed geopolitical relationships with each other to establish a sense of community or that movement compromises social bonds. In my Jackson chapter, I argue that *Ramona* criticizes the unjust settlement of Native lands and America's inability to recognize Native sovereignty. Regarding Elliott, I analyze how her novel destabilizes physical mobility's direct relationship to social mobility and its refutation of fixed regional class hierarchies. Finally, I claim that Sui Sin Far's stories critique exclusionary immigration politics and

stereotypes of Chinese Americans. With their depiction of problematic or unjust social practices, all of the texts in *The Path She Had Chosen* become a “rhetorical construction” for speaking about systems of oppression (Fetterley and Pryse, *Writing Out of Place* 15).

### **Regions as Unfixed, Yet Grounded Forces**

With the exception of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (which is arguably a novel) and Sui Sin Far’s short stories, the remaining texts under consideration are novels that have the narrative space to show mobility’s shaping factors. My interest in agency also demands longer texts that reveal characters’ development over time. With one exception, I order the novels chronologically; I place Jewett’s novel before Jackson’s because of Jewett’s iconic status as a regionalist. Her chapter also precedes the rest because it develops more general issues of communal belonging that frame later works’ consideration of social problems relating to race, class, gender, and ethnicity. Each chapter begins with an analysis of how mobility helps the texts problematize systems of power. I conclude each chapter with a discussion of how the characters’ mobility ultimately speaks back to myths about regionalism. Essentially, each chapter reveals how the study of mobility provides new readings of local color texts that reject generic conventions.

In the chapter on Jewett’s *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, I build on Philip Joseph’s argument that the novel is more a narrative of communal acceptance than a travel narrative in which the visitor exoticizes the inhabitants. I argue that the community welcomes the narrator because she participates in local systems of mobility. These

moments of physical movement allow the narrator to gain a broader understanding of Dunnet Landing, which I argue, troubles the notion that regionalist literature offers a limited perspective of a geopolitical location.

The next chapter on Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona* demonstrates how instead of solidifying existing communities, representations of mobility critique the destruction of indigenous communities. By leaving the various spaces of California that Anglo-settlers want to acquire, Ramona's absences illustrate her desire to dwell in a geopolitical location that values her people's land rights and her agency to challenge dominant systems. Also in this chapter, cultures become as mobile as the characters. With each move, Ramona adapts her bicultural Scottish and Native-American heritage to her new home, thus disproving the notion that cultures have to exist within a geopolitical location. With culture as a mobile force, regions no longer have to bear the burden of grounding (literally and figuratively) cultural identities.

The concept of multi-spatial regions surfaces in the chapter on Sarah Barnwell Elliott's *The Durket Sperret*, when the protagonist's movements from cove to town resist set economic spheres, illustrating that one can be poor in the affluent area and simultaneously wealthy in the rural areas, depending on one's definition of class. Thus, Elliott's writing contradicts Wendy Parkins's assertion that movement represents access to social capital (14). The chapter also illustrates the danger of associating regions with fixed class systems or uniform poverty.

While the first three chapters show how characters' mobility facilitates regionalism's commentary upon problematic social issues such as community formation,



the mistreatment of Native Americans, and class hierarchies, my discussion of Sui Sin Far argues that her stories not only evaluate societal issues but also use mobility to understand the psychology of identities in conflict. Although we see how characters in previous chapters develop the agency to resist oppressive systems, the earlier writers seldom focus on interiority or on how the self fares from this behavior. *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* uses mobility to enable the psychological development of characters torn between cultural identities. Her stories essentially ask what happens to the identity of a person who is rendered immobile? Sui Sin Far's characters regularly encounter restrictions that prevent them from moving internationally; this limited mobility complicates their ethnic identities. Conversely, localized movement (maneuvering through one's immediate community) frequently reinforces a sense of ethnic identity for many characters in the collection.

Even though earlier regionalist works do not necessarily share realism's enthusiasm for psychological development, they do fall prey to the same accusations of limited scope that burden realistic writing. Talking about realism's obsession with the seemingly mundane details of life, naturalist Frank Norris says that "Realism is minute...the tragedy of a walk down the block, the excitement of an afternoon call...Realism bows upon the doormat and goes away and says to me, as we link arms on the sidewalk: 'That is life.' And I say it is not" (113). In his disdain for the realistic narrative mode, Norris rejects meaning in life's little movements. Yet, the regionalists in this project show that even the minutest form of movement shapes the characters' lives. Whether it is a shared walk to gather pennyroyal as in Jewett's sketches, the move to

escape Anglo settlement in Jackson's novel, the decision to peddle goods within Elliott's text, or immigration to the U.S. as in Sui Sin Far's collection -- each move resonates for the characters and frames our understanding of their regions.

Every move the characters make also destabilizes "truths" the literary world has held about regionalism. No longer can we view regionalism as a monolithic force that perpetuates homogeneity, spatial and cultural containment, and isolation from a rapidly modernizing outside world. Instead, the characters' movements illustrate that regions are demographically, culturally, and geographically diverse, with many internal divisions based on gender, race, class, and ethnicity. Richard Brodhead argues that regionalist literatures grew out of a fear of the "growingly powerful social model that overrode previously autonomous systems and incorporated them into translocal agglomerations" (119). However, as the characters move through multiple spaces, we see that regions and regionalist literature have always been "translocal," consisting of multiple spaces, varied demographic populations, and manifold cultural beliefs.

So the remaining question is: if regionalism is not about culturally unified spaces, concrete geopolitical boundaries, or a specific temporal moment, then what is it doing and what types of spaces does it represent? The easy answer, and the answer current scholars such as Tom Lutz and Philip Joseph would support, suggests that regionalism increasingly is seen as a discourse on cosmopolitanism and globalism; certainly, analysis of characters' mobility lends itself to such a framework by dismantling the genre's perpetuation of fixed cultural, spatial, and temporal identities.

However, we must be careful about heralding nineteenth and early-twentieth-century regionalism's cosmopolitan and global qualities. While we no longer live in an age of isolated cultural villages, we also cannot let regionalism drift into the postmodern ether of nothingness where pluralism and absolute inclusiveness reign. Regionalism as a hegemonic force demands deconstruction because all hegemonic forces can become oppressive in their absolutism. However, by situating the genre entirely within an abstract ideology such as cosmopolitanism, we risk negating the specific historic and cultural moments from which regionalists wrote. For Jewett, Jackson, Elliott, and Sui Sin Far, their commentary on community formation, racial oppression, class hierarchies, ethnic marginalization, and normative gender behavior is anything but abstract. These regionalists had definite ideas about what was wrong with their era and used their writing to express their concerns. They also resisted abstraction by writing about regional spaces where actual people lived, spaces that were subject to the laws and prevailing mentalities of a specific historic time period that feared difference and change.

I do not wish to imply that cosmopolitanism is not a useful concept for that historical time period. Lutz's *Cosmopolitan Vistas* effectively argues that the notion of cosmopolitanism could theoretically apply to late nineteenth and early twentieth-century regionalist works. We should not throw out the terminology entirely. We simply need to understand regionalism's cosmopolitan tendencies without reducing a genre concerned with social realities to a theoretical abstraction. Essentially, there must be some way to unite current scholarship on the genre's global qualities with its interest in reforming the

local community. I argue that analyzing mobility in regionalist literature unifies these two seemingly disparate perspectives.

Instead of being located entirely within the rhetoric of a timeless cosmopolitanism or a specific historic moment, reading mobility in regionalism allows the genre to become both unfixed and grounded, "a terrain, an intersection, a network, a crossroads of multiply situated knowledge" (Friedman 19). As a "terrain" or "crossroads," through which characters move, regionalism offers vantage points to witness power structures in need of dismantling. As a more ambiguous "intersection," or "network" of "multiply situated knowledge," regionalism respects the multiplicity, diversity, and pluralism that cosmopolitanism advocates and globalism demands. Current scholarship needs a new way of reading the genre that makes it applicable to the time it was written and to our contemporary, rapidly globalizing world; the analysis of mobility provides this framework.

Although these four authors did not necessarily write about characters that moved in the Native canoes, Italian gondolas, Japanese warships or the Brazilian log boats exhibited in the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, their texts were no less revolutionary than these marvelous examples of transportation. The aforementioned writers offer radical revisions of existing social conventions like the tools of human transport. Just as the innovative forms of conveyance encouraged people to revise their ideas about transportation, these texts ask people to reconsider hierarchies such as race, class, ethnicity, and gender that impede or sustain communal belonging. Like the displayed objects of worldly transportation, local color writing also breaks down

boundaries between cultural groups. By presenting regions as heterogeneous, multifaceted, culturally inclusive spaces, regionalist texts participate in the discourse of cosmopolitanism, inclusivity, and cultural pluralism that the World's Columbian Exposition hoped to generate. When we read regionalist texts as we would view the transportation exhibit at the World's Fair, we see that these literary works speak simultaneously to the historic moment in which they were created and to the cosmopolitan future of a rapidly globalizing world.

## Notes

<sup>i</sup>. While it is important to note that real regions are not the same as literary regions, one being a geopolitical space and the other being a *representation* of a geopolitical space, I believe that literary regions are good tools for understanding the ways that spatial negotiations shape personal identities and the ways that both real regions and literary regions develop identities themselves as cultural entities.

<sup>ii</sup>. In *Cultures of Letters*, Richard Brodhead also issues concerns about the urban reader's consumption of regional literature, saying that “the genre offered freshly found primitive places for *the mental resort* of the sophisticated...and administered especially effectively to the imagination of acquisition” (133, emphasis added).

## CHAPTER II

### JEWETT'S DUNNET LANDING: "A HAPPY, RURAL SEAT OF VARIOUS VIEWS"

"The first thing she could remember was a world bounded by the white paling fences around her house," F.O. Matthiessen says of Sarah Orne Jewett's childhood (1). Yet young Jewett would not be contained. Just as Jewett would sneak under the fence into her grandfather's neighboring yard (Matthiessen 1-2), her works also escape bounded spaces. *Atlantic* editor, William Dean Howells later called these unbounded texts "incomparable sketches," valuable for their "free movement, unfettered by the limits of plot, and keeping only to the reality" (194). While Howells actually references Jewett's resistance to linear narratives, her texts, especially her 1896 novel, *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, value "free movement" in content as well through highly mobile characters. In Jewett's world, the characters' "movements, rightly viewed, are as trivial yet as meaningful as the dartings of a perch" (Ziff 289). To a writer who takes great stock in the natural world, "the dartings of a perch" are no small matter.

In *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, even the minutest demonstration of movement is significant. Group and individual mobility practiced locally and across broad distances within *The Country of the Pointed Firs* enables non-locals to become insiders and existing community members to become closer. A study of mobility in Jewett's novel reveals that the text is not as some critics have suggested, a vacation narrative about an interloper exoticizing a foreign culture.<sup>1</sup> Instead, it is about bonding through shared

movement. As the narrator becomes a member of Dunnet Landing by moving with local residents, she expands her understanding of the town's culture. Her wanderings expose a diverse culture, contradicting critics who see regionalism as perpetuating homogeneous spaces and limited, totalizing perspectives.

This chapter begins by contextualizing mobility in Jewett's work and life. Rather than distance Jewett from her New England culture, her peregrinations through America, the Caribbean, and Europe make her more attuned to how movement stabilizes a community such as Dunnet Landing. The second section builds on existing scholarship that argues for the importance of fellowship in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. Unlike other scholars who assert that the community unites through similarities in race, class, and age, I argue that mobility links the citizens together. In the third section I focus specifically on the narrator's acceptance within the community, arguing that the narrator's local journeys allow her to join the society not as a foreign visitor but as an honorary member. Building on the ways mobility solidifies relationships, the fourth section argues that characters do not necessarily have to maneuver physically through space together to bond over movement; the narrator better understands the town's members by empathizing with their desires to travel and their narratives of seafaring adventures. The final section progresses from analyzing content in Jewett's novel to the larger genre of regionalism when I argue that the study of mobility in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* shows how regionalism resists conceptually contained, homogeneous spaces.



### Contextualizing Jewett's Mobility

In praising the “free movement” of Jewett’s works, Howells was well ahead of his time. Other critics would not acknowledge her characters’ mobility until the late twentieth century. Early twentieth-century critics admired the author's documentation of New England society and her style that blended realism with the supernatural (Petrie, *Conscience* 79). Later critics of the 1960s such as Warner Berthoff and Hyatt H. Waggoner explored Jewett’s literary form. Feminist scholars of the 1990s, such as Judith Fetterley, Marjorie Pryse, Sandra Zagarell, and Elizabeth Ammons, studied Jewett’s representation of strong female communities (Petrie, *Conscience* 79). Also in the nineties, scholars such as Amy Kaplan and Richard Brodhead, along with Zagarell and Ammons, began to critique the potentially imperial, racist, and classist nature of Jewett’s work. In the late nineties, Karen Kilcup and Thomas S. Edwards' collection, *Jewett and Her Contemporaries* called for additional contextualization of the author's works, repositioning her writing within late-nineteenth-century literary trends. However, throughout the many evolutions of Jewett criticism, only Marilyn Mobley and Marilyn C. Wesley focus on the “free movement” that her characters express. Mobley argues that the characters’ mobility demonstrates anxiety about their relationship to the region. Wesley’s scholarship analyzes how female characters’ movement blurs the lines between public and domestic spaces.<sup>ii</sup> I build on Mobley and Wesley’s arguments, venturing beyond the scope of female characters to analyze how mobility unites diverse figures within the community.

The lack of scholarly attention to mobility in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* is odd, given the extent to which Jewett's work is "deeply and systematically concerned with circuits of communication and transportation" (Howard 26). Aside from *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, nearly all of her other well-known texts reveal how people negotiate different spaces. Jewett's *Deephaven* (1877) tells of Kate Lancaster and Helen Denis's summer trip to the quiet village of Deephaven, Maine. *A Country Doctor* (1884) describes Nan Prince's journeys with Dr. Leslie as he visits patients and Jewett's popular short story, "A White Heron" (1886), depicts an ornithologist's quest to find an elusive bird.

As in her writing, Jewett used mobility as "a means of ripening friendship, getting to know first-hand what had been read about, and savoring, in a new environment, old and familiar attachments," especially through trips with her companion, Annie Fields (Buchan 93). Together, they visited Europe with Thomas Aldrich and traveled to the Fields's summer home in Massachusetts. Jewett also traveled on her own, visiting friends in Boston, New York, Cincinnati, Philadelphia, and even Wisconsin (Cary 24-25).

Some might say that Jewett's multiple residences outside of Maine compromised her authenticity as a regional writer and her connection to the region (Thompson 494). In 1904, Charles Miner Thompson even wrote in the *Atlantic* that her works took on the quality of "an observer *de haut en bas*," after she left Maine (494). However, viewing Jewett as a tourist does not do justice to her investment in the local community, especially her hometown of Berwick, Maine. Even though she traveled often, she still felt

attached to her community, as she notes in an 1894 essay entitled "The Old Town of Berwick." She says:

I am proud to have been made of Berwick dust; and a little of it is apt to fly in my eyes and make them blur whenever I tell the old stories of bravery, of fine ambition, of good manners, and the love of friend for friend and the kindness of neighbor to neighbor in this beloved town. (n.p.)

Like Jewett, many of Berwick's inhabitants leave the coast; however, they still maintain a connection to home. In her essay, she claims that the townspeople:

can almost hear each other's voices round the world, like the English drumbeat. They have started many a Western town; they are buried in Southern graves for their country's sake; they are lost in far northern seas. They sigh for the greenness of Old Fields and Pound Hill, for Blackberry Hill and Cranberry Meadow, from among the brick walls of many a crowded city. (n.p.)

Jewett knows that physical absence does not mean disconnection from one's home.

Instead, communal bonds unite fellow Berwickians throughout foreign lands.

While many ventured away from the coast, Jewett also recognized the vast numbers of people migrating to Maine who sought employment in the state's thriving lumbering, shipbuilding, and ocean trade. These individuals came from all over the world: Canada, Sweden, Norway, Bulgaria, and Poland (Clark 141). In an essay entitled "My School Days" (1887), Jewett mentions soldiers who had traveled to the South, two Danes who arrived with a prominent shipmaster, and Cubans who boarded at the local boarding house. Her writing shows her familiarity with Maine's demographic diversity. By 1843, Maine had two major rail lines to facilitate international trade and to help Americans visit what had once been a rural outpost. One railway ran from Portland to

Halifax and the other from Portland to Montreal (Clark 92). Even as the shipping industry started to decline with the steamship's development in the late 1890s, many Americans (like the novel's narrator) still flocked to the region for vacations. The very lack of industry that seemed to hearken Maine's economic death, actually became the impetus for large-scale tourism when Americans sought an escape from urbanization (Clark 153). However, as Jewett's novel shows, these tourists were not necessarily a threat to the region's culture. Provided that they could move within the community, *The Country of the Pointed Firs* reveals how sightseers could become honorary residents.

### **Not the Average Travel Narrative**

Consideration of the narrator's membership status is important for a novel that revolves around communal belonging. While some critics argue that the work deals more with social isolation than belonging, many Jewett scholars feel that the text emphasizes the closeness of small-town residents over loneliness.<sup>iii</sup> The following section builds on Philip Joseph's argument that *The Country of the Pointed Firs* is not the typical travel narrative in which an outsider desires only superficial membership. Instead, I argue that Jewett's novel depicts how a foreigner uses mobility to gain acceptance in an exclusive society.

However, before we can view the narrator as an official member of Dunnet Landing, we must first note the novel's emphasis on belonging and exclusivity. In her often-cited article about the text's narrative structure, Elizabeth Ammons notes that the work does not evolve in a linear fashion, but rather, develops in a cyclical pattern in

which characters circulate through communal spaces. This structure allows the text to focus more on the characters' relationships instead of "a competitive approach to life" ("Going in Circles" 83.) Similarly, Sandra Zagarell argues that *The Country of the Pointed Firs* is indicative of a larger genre of women's writing called the Narrative of Community that became popular in early nineteenth-century U.S. and Britain ("Narrative" 501).<sup>iv</sup>

While Zagarell and Ammons are correct to assert the novel's interest in community, we must also consider that Dunnet Landing is part of a larger regional, national, and global network, which the narrator's arrival evidences. While the narrator travels to the community seeking a different lifestyle from her ordinary world, she is more than a tourist seeking refuge from urbanization. By gaining membership through shared mobility with the residents, Jewett's novel shows how an outsider can ethically interact with an unfamiliar community. Thus, *The Country of the Pointed Firs* is not the typical travel narrative because it avoids the binary between the foreign and the local.

Jewett's novel is unique in showing how an outsider can become part of a rural, isolated group, since gaining membership to a small-town community was not an easy task in the late nineteenth century. In 1893, three years before *The Country of the Pointed Firs* was published, Frederick Turner Jackson declared the closing of the Western U.S. At this time, both regional and national spaces were considered "closed," or more interested in exclusion than obtaining new membership (Kaplan, "Nation, Region, and Empire" 243). Now that the U.S. had limited geopolitical borders, communities became preoccupied with keeping people *out* of their restricted space. Stephanie Foote argues that

regionalism thusly turned into a genre very concerned with “who is a native and who is a stranger,” while refusing to define modes of membership (“Cultural Work” 36).

However, Jewett’s novel rejects this trend of exclusivity. By the end of the novel, the narrator has attained belonging in Dunnet Landing as evidenced by Elijah Tilley’s acknowledgement of her fishing skill. With this recognition, readers realize that “this is not the same woman who amazed Johnny Bowden with her ignorance of William’s signal flag” (Voelker 246 - 247). She has learned to participate in the town’s customs and has an awareness of local symbols just like any resident. The narrator also demonstrates her belonging by fearing a return to the outside world as a “foreigner” (129). She has reversed her initial outsider position, showing she is now more comfortable in the town that she once found so strange. This reversal demonstrates the narrator’s “successful immersion” into the community of Dunnet Landing (Joseph, “Landed and Literary” 153). I argue that this recognition is not something instantly granted. The town is not as exclusive in its communal membership as Ammons and Zagarell assert, but it also does not grant fellowship to just anyone. The narrator must use her mobility to become one of the town’s members.

### **Mobility in Dunnet Landing**

Although Jewett must address the rapid decline of a once-thriving shipping industry, the novel’s coastal setting nevertheless generates mobility for its inhabitants. The narrator, Poor Joanna, Captain Littlepage, and Mrs. Todd all move as individuals. Group mobility occurs through funeral processions, venturing en masse to destinations,

and family marches. Mobility also unites characters that enact pilgrimages to ritualized sites and empathize with excursionists after hearing narratives of mobility. Movement occurs in small-scale and large-scale form, involving everything from walking a neighbor to the edge of the yard to touring the world. It also blurs the boundaries between routine travel and exploratory travel. Negotiating spatial locatedness in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* essentially sustains the community's connections instead of fracturing local affiliations, which as later chapters show, occurs in *Ramona* and *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* when oppressive systems either force or impede mobility.

Because of the region's fading shipping industry, many critics see Dunnet Landing as a place of sessility. For example, Stephanie Foote claims that Dunnet Landing's inhabitants are as paralyzed as the ghostly population that Littlepage's friend finds in the surreal Artic town ("Cultural Work" 25). For these individuals, "rootedness" is a part of life (Ziff 291). Even the novel's women who have some ability to meander through town are supposedly "frustrated" with an inability to move beyond the domestic sphere (Bell 76). However, the numerous moments of movement in the novel far outweigh any representations of spatial fixity.

It is no coincidence that Jewett's novel opens with "The Return," indicating movement back to a familiar destination (Petrie, *Conscience* 100). After the docks, the first space the reader encounters is Mrs. Todd's house with its "numerous boundaries and thresholds" such as "fences, gates, windows, and doorways" that "allow easy passage" (Ammons, "Material Culture" 86). Rather than separate characters from each other, the porous borders of the house encourage mobility over confinement and interaction with

others over isolation. The home also facilitates communal engagement as the town's center for homeopathic remedies. Mrs. Todd's house is a hub of people who come from all over the region due to her "widespread reputation" and knowledge of healing herbs (8). While movement towards Mrs. Todd's house seems quotidian, it is one of the many forms of mobility that unites the locals. Additionally, when the characters are not traveling towards Mrs. Todd's house or elsewhere, they are focusing on characters that come and go; Mrs. Todd welcomes Mrs. Fosdick and bids goodbye to the narrator just as Mrs. Blackwell welcomes the group to her island (Howard 26).

When characters depart from the region, even inanimate objects sustain connections through movement. Seafaring individuals often bring home souvenirs to show consideration of loved ones during the voyage. Mrs. Blackett's father gives her mother an exotic tea caddy from Tobago, and Mr. Todd brings his cousin, Joanna, a coral pin. With this gift, Mrs. Todd essentially asks the narrator to think fondly of Dunnet Landing, just as Mr. Todd thought fondly of his cousin while away at sea.

In the novel, the smallest moments of mutual mobility strengthen the bonds between locals. The seemingly insignificant act of walking through a neighbor's front door becomes ceremonious when Mrs. Blackett receives the narrator through the special visitor's entrance. Mrs. Blackett might not have many people visit her, but when they do, they are treated royally, as the narrator observes: "it was indeed a tribute to Society to find a room set apart for her behests out there on so apparently neighborless and remote an island" (41). Even though Mrs. Blackett's home is "neighborless" and "remote," she is still "tied to the mainland by friendship, kinship, and periodic calls for her nursing skill"



(Blanchard 284). Her own passages to shore demonstrate how travel connects her with friends and relatives. While we see only her one trip to the mainland for the Bowden reunion, she has evidently invested time into relationships that unite “the far island and these scattered farms into a golden chain of love” (90).

Movements into a house and walking a neighbor to the gate are examples of small-scale mobility. When characters cover great distances to visit loved ones, the novel’s many references to pilgrims and processions give movement religious significance. Based upon her reading of the quintessential pilgrim novel, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Heidi Oberholtzer defines the pilgrim as one who embarks on a "journey of interrelated spiritual and physical development" that results in "reaching a destination of spiritual reward at a site of holiness" (2). Oberholtzer's definition of pilgrimage makes the process a solitary venture. However, Dunnet Landing's residents embark on pilgrimages to bond with other locals; the sense of holiness that results is not one of individual transcendence, but rather of spiritual connectivity to the surrounding world and its inhabitants. For example, the beloved Mrs. Fosdick is called “entertaining pilgrim” because her visits throughout town bring much joy to her hosts (59). Similarly, processions of people journey to the Bowden reunion “in single file, like old illustrations of the Pilgrim’s Progress,” demonstrating the ritualistic devotion to heritage (98). The annual return to the sacred site and reference to “pilgrimage” signifies a ceremony of belonging in which the narrator is truly fortunate to participate; her involvement means that she belongs to the town’s community and also to the privileged Bowden clan.

In Dunnet Landing, pilgrimages not only solidify the connectivity of those immediately present, but also of the past through rituals that honor cherished ancestors. When the narrator notes that Joanna's grave was a spot "not without its pilgrims," she confirms the town's respect for the dead martyr who sacrificed companionship for dignity (82). Although the narrator never knew Joanna personally, she engages in the ritualistic journey herself and joins those who keep the exile's memory alive. As long as new visitors seek the site, the journeys of those who "bring hearts full of remembrance" will not be in vain (82). Sharing stories of pilgrimage such as when Mrs. Todd tells the narrator of her visit to Joanna's island helps "preserve and transfer cultural values from one generation to the next through re-enacting well-traveled paths of memory" (Oberholtzer 5). Thus, by listening to Mrs. Todd's narrative and then going on the trip herself, the narrator better understands how much the town values Joanna as a part of its history. Through her pilgrimage, the narrator not only connects with the recluse on a personal level as I argue later, but also learns of the town's past.<sup>v</sup>

Mobility is part of Dunnet Landing's existence as a community whose economic stability depended on the routine cycle of incoming and outgoing ships. Jewett's novel blends the two distinct types of shipping industry mobility – movement of a daily routine and travel to explore unknown regions. In Dunnet Landing, both forms of mobility unify social networks. When the narrator visits Joanna's grave, she journeys to a new place. Nonetheless, her movement also participates in the ritualistic mobility of other residents. When the seafaring individuals leave port, they engage in a regular activity that is part of the town's economic and cultural history; however these pilgrims of the sea also diversify

the region by bringing new culture and ways of life into the small, coastal town. Even Mrs. Todd habitually goes on expeditions to find herbs. By collapsing daily mobility with exploratory travel, the text further affirms the narrator's right to belong. The region's inhabitants cannot hold her status as traveler against her since all of Dunnet Landing participates routinely in trips to explore unfamiliar regions.

### **Belonging through Shared Mobility**

While mobility designates belonging in Dunnet Landing, a lack of mobility can prevent social membership.<sup>vi</sup> For example, the Reverend Dimmick does not know how to trim a sail and screeches for help at a gust of wind while on a trip to Joanna's island. Mrs. Todd notes his ineptitude, saying he "liked to have cost me my life that day" (70). Mrs. Fosdick confirms his status as useless landlubber: "I do think they ought not to settle them landlocked folks in parishes where they're liable to be on the water" (70). Mrs. Fosdick knows that to be a part of a community, one has to be able to move like its members. She laments all of the families "scattered all about the bay" that could have benefited from a more seafaring minister (70). She herself does not pass up an opportunity to connect with others through mobility. The narrator observes that Mrs. Fosdick is "the best hand in the world to make a visit...as if to visit were the highest of vocations" (58). In Dunnet Landing, one cannot perform his or her vocation if he or she is not mobile; conversely, if one is mobile then he or she performs the noblest of social functions – connecting with fellow regional inhabitants.

Captain Littlepage also has difficulty moving with the town. When the narrator observes him from the school house window, she notes, “I could not help thinking that, with his queer head and length of thinness, he was made to hop along the road of life rather than walk” (17). Littlepage follows the town's progression towards Mrs. Beck's gravesite, but literally marches to his own beat. His unusual personality somewhat stunts his walk with the procession (and his ability to join in the community by extension). Still, even with his hobbling gait, his movement is not strange enough to disqualify him from acceptance. In contrast to Littlepage, who walks with Mrs. Todd (the processional's paragon of belonging), Mari' Harris follows impatiently behind everyone. Her physical distance from the mourners and her intolerance of the process denotes her social distance. The town calls her “that Mari' Harris” and designates her as a “Chinee,” indicating that she is neither communal mourner nor communal member (14, 103).

Philip Joseph reads Mari' Harris and Santin Bowden as the town's outcasts, arguing that both are Othered by race; he asserts that Mari' Harris resembles the Chinese and Santin Bowden is too Norman to be American (*American* 32). However, I argue that Santin Bowden is more accepted than Mari', not because he is less racially marginalized, but because he participates in shared forms of mobility. While Mari' trudges behind Littlepage and Mrs. Todd, Santin Bowden assumes the authority of organizing the families' mass procession at the Bowden reunion. When this military strategist demonstrates his ability to marshal the crowd with “perfect ease,” he asserts with the “solemn dignity of importance” his belonging in a group where marching together means

belonging (99). He becomes a respected authority of communal movement when the marchers stand “as speechless as a troop to await his orders” (101).

Like Santin Bowden, the narrator also connects with Dunnet Landing society through movement. In fact, she becomes so familiar with the town’s reliance on mobility that she even utilizes a language of movement to represent her friendship with Elijah Tilley. After talking with him she notes, “I found that I had suddenly left the forbidding coast and come into the smooth little harbor of friendship” (118). She has learned to sail (at least metaphorically) into the safe “harbor” of camaraderie with one of the town’s more introspective members. Aside from physically moving with the town’s members, she masters the discourse of movement that Dunnet Landing’s people speak as retired sea captains, fishermen, and sailors.

However, this integration into the mobile community does not happen instantaneously. It develops over the course of the novel, starting with the moment the narrator first sets foot in the town. Jewett scholarship often overlooks the narrator’s arrival. Yet it is significant in marking her as an outsider. When she lands, she encounters “a fine crowd of spectators and the younger portion followed her with subdued excitement” (2). Notably, the youth follow the narrator to her new residence. She has not yet earned her right to walk with the town’s members. At the next opportunity for shared movement, the narrator again reveals her status as nonresident by not participating. Instead of walking with others in Mrs. Begg’s funeral procession, the narrator returns to the schoolhouse to continue writing, branding herself as a foreigner and further distancing herself from Dunnet Landing society (Petrie, *Conscience* 103).

Juxtaposed with the narrator's noticeable absence from the procession, we see Mrs. Todd's sense of loss as she walks and weeps with fellow mourners. Mrs. Todd, a true member of Dunnet Landing, shows what "was not an affected grief" by moving with others in shared sadness (13). Seeing Mrs. Todd's communal mobility makes the narrator regret her own absence: "watching the funeral gave one a sort of pain. I began to wonder if I ought not to have walked with the rest, instead of hurrying away at the end of the services" (15). She realizes that she will never belong if she cannot participate in the community's collective displays of mobility.

Contrasting the narrator's lack of communal mobility at the beginning of the novel, the Bowden reunion becomes the culmination of shared, relationship-establishing movement. By venturing to the reunion with Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Blackett, "the narrator participates in the deep community that briefly, and only once a year, must serve as a bulwark against the stark isolation of life in the region" (Pryse, Introduction xv). The journey is almost as significant as the reunion itself in uniting characters. Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Blackett use the trip to reconnect with friends along the way. The narrator observes these encounters noting, "my friends stopped several times for brief dooryard visits, and made so many promises of stopping again on the way home that I began to wonder how long the expedition would last" (90). With their promises to return, the two women simultaneously rekindle old friendships and ensure the possibility of ongoing connectivity through future meetings. The trip also helps Mrs. Blackett and Mrs. Todd strengthen their attachment to the narrator. She values this time together just as much as the reunion musing, "whatever might be the good of the reunion, I was going to have the

pleasure and delight of a day in Mrs. Blackett's company, not to speak of Mrs. Todd's" (87). When they reach the gathering, the simple act of arriving with the prestigious Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Blackett is enough to solidify the narrator's membership. As they arrive, the narrator confesses, "I felt like an adopted Bowden in this happy moment" (99). Anyone who travels in the same conveyance as the famed and much loved Mrs. Blackett receives instant acceptance.

The culmination of shared mobility occurs when the families march in a processional towards the Bowden home. In this almost transcendent moment the narrator abandons her individual identity to participate in a collectively-mobile consciousness: "we were no more a New England family celebrating its own existence and simple progress; we carried the tokens and inheritance of all such households from which this had descended, and were only the latest of our line" (100). Moving with the Bowden clan enables the narrator to relate to those that are immediately present as well as the ancestral Bowdens of prior processions. This sense of membership is very different from the "detached ignorance" the narrator demonstrated in neglecting to walk with Mrs. Begg's mourners (Moble 6).

Processions play a large role in Dunnet Landing's social system. They occur when visitors step off a ship, as well as when residents celebrate joyous occasions or mourn the lost. Yet we cannot neglect the more intimate moments of shared mobility that help the narrator feel at home. One might not think that moving with one other person would have a profound effect on membership status within the community. However, these moments, especially those that the narrator shares with Mrs. Todd, critically shape

her belonging. As one of the town's most mobile and respected members, the narrator is right to want to gain Mrs. Todd's acceptance; however, before bonding with Mrs. Todd over shared movement, the narrator must understand the widow's relationship to mobility.

Mrs. Todd's love of motion and desire for a broad "scope" of life make her one of the town's most mobile figures. In fact, Mrs. Todd would have been "very restless if she'd had to continue" living on the isolated Green Island (52). Instead of limiting herself to a single island, Mrs. Todd travels the countryside to find herbs. Yet she does not always need to cover great distances. For her, small-scale mobility can sustain bonds just as well as long-distance mobility. Even though she is a "saver of steps," the narrator observes that Mrs. Todd still accompanies some of the more difficult cases "on their healing way as far as the gate," offering "long chapters of directions" (4).

Even in the minutest sense, Mrs. Todd's herb-gathering mobility helps the narrator become better acquainted with the widow. Early in her stay the narrator notes:

If Mrs. Todd had occasion to step into the far corner of her herb plot, she trod heavily upon thyme, and made its fragrant presence known... You could always tell when she was stepping about there, even when you were half awake in the morning, and learned to know, in the course of a few weeks' experience, in exactly which corner of the garden she might be. (3)

As the scents of the herbs arise from Mrs. Todd's movement in her garden, the narrator learns to identify her landlady's location. While seemingly minor, this acquisition of knowledge starts the cycle of movement leading to the narrator's intimate knowledge of the herbalist. Mobility continues to help the narrator learn about Mrs. Todd when they visit Green Island. The narrator notes that "I had become well acquainted with Mrs. Todd



as a landlady, herb-gather, and rustic philosopher...but I was yet to become acquainted with her as a mariner,” showing how traveling together allows her to know Mrs. Todd in yet another capacity (32). Once she sees this new side of her landlady, she realizes Mrs. Todd’s investment in the community, especially when she jokes with the other boatmen on shore who try to tell her how to sail. In this world of sea travel, Mrs. Todd claims belonging by commanding the method of movement in contrast to the outsider, Parson Dimmick, who does not know how to operate a boat (33). By becoming better acquainted with Mrs. Todd, the narrator by extension becomes better acquainted with the society in which Mrs. Todd moves.

Once the two women reach Green Island, the narrator continues to cultivate her relationship with Mrs. Todd through mobility. Even though she does not want to walk with Mrs. Todd after dinner, the narrator goes nevertheless, sensing the importance of her participation. The occasion allows Mrs. Todd to sneak family daguerreotypes out of the house to show the narrator. These images reveal a more private side of the Blackett family, bringing the narrator closer to Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Blackett, two cornerstones of the Bowden clan. With a close connection to these two privileged members established, the narrator ultimately solidifies Dunnet Landing membership. She becomes further entrusted with Mrs. Todd’s confidence when the widower reveals her secret pennyroyal site during their walk. Venturing together to this private space confirms their special bond of trust. Revealing this location's significance, Mrs. Todd tells the narrator “I never showed nobody else but my mother where to find this place; tis kind of sainted to me” (49). This gesture of confidence gained through shared mobility is not lost on the narrator

who feels “that we were friends now since she had brought me to this place” (49). By sailing, hiking and gathering herbs together, the two women strengthen their connection to each other and the region they move through.

Gender arguably affects how these two women bond. Contrary to the larger nation, Dunnet Landing is not restrictive of female mobility and refutes the idea that females must contain themselves to the domestic sphere (Mobley 36). When men do become mobile in this world of moving women, they hinder female movement, as demonstrated by Mrs. Todd’s reluctance to have males on her trip to Green Island or when Mr. Dimmick “puts their safety in jeopardy” (Duneer 222).

While gender strengthens the bond between the narrator and Mrs. Todd, I do not necessarily believe that, as Mobley and Anita Duneer claim, the novel makes one gender more mobile than the other. Contrary to Duneer’s assertion, men are not incompetent expeditionists. Dunnet Landing’s mostly female graveyard shows that the men are still mobile; their adventures simply prevent them from returning home. While Jewett’s novel implies that most of Dunnet Landing’s men died at sea, she might also be depicting the “historical phenomenon” of males leaving rural communities for the demands of a rapidly industrializing economy (Wood 18). Yet even with the absence of these itinerant men, the remaining Dunnet Landing males navigate through space as frequently as the female residents. Captain and Johnny Bowden charter boats; Captain Littlepage joins the local funeral procession, and Elijah Tilley works with the other retired boatmen who bring in boats. Even William, one of the island’s shy introverts, moves all over his little island; although he does not go great distances, William’s “interest in the smallest details of his

home terrain suggests that, without possessing the sophistication of a world traveler, he has traveled much on and around the island” (Duneer 229).

Shared gender may help the narrator bond with Mrs. Todd, but it certainly does not prevent her from bonding with males through mobility. Just as she becomes closer with Mrs. Todd by journeying together, the narrator also connects with William through mobility. Some critics say that William bonds with the narrator over a shared love of nature (Blanchard 296). William shows the narrator natural objects that are special to him, much in the same way Mrs. Todd reveals her inner self by sharing family photos. However, William could easily show the narrator natural objects close to Mrs. Blackett’s house. It is not the objects, but the act of moving towards these objects that helps the narrator relate to the elusive William. He does not speak when he hands the narrator a symbolic flower during their hike to the ledge; just walking together gives the narrator an understanding of William’s quiet nature and an appreciation of his symbolic gestures. Upon reaching the ledge, William observes that “there ain’t no such view in the world, I expect” (45). As a more seasoned traveler, the narrator knows this perspective might not be true. Yet she does not argue with him because she has walked with him long enough to understand the love he feels for his “native heath” (45).

### **Empathetic Mobility**

The narrator connects with William by sharing his trajectory across Green Island. However, Jewett’s novel shows us that two characters do not have to move together simultaneously through space to sustain connectivity. *The Country of the Pointed Firs*

challenges our understanding of mobility as a physical experience by revealing that one can connect with someone over mobility without having to maneuver through space together; instead, someone can move emotionally with a mobile person by empathizing with his or her journey.

While mostly about community ties, Jewett's novel does present several characters that remain emotionally distant from others. Poor Joanna distances herself both physically and mentally from the town when she exiles herself to an island, while Captain Littlepage's strange habits and behaviors separate him from the other residents. In both cases, the narrator finds herself relating to these social recluses when she empathizes with their narratives of mobility. When she hears about Joanna's self-imposed exile, the narrator understands the desire for solitude and the agency to move. After Captain Littlepage tells the narrator about his sea adventures, she sympathizes with his excitement for exploring unknown places and supernatural mysteries. The narrator's empathy for Joanna and Littlepage in turn, solidifies her membership within a town that compassionately accepts these individuals as members despite their idiosyncrasies.

Joanna's biggest idiosyncrasy is that she feels herself unworthy of associating with Dunnet Landing after abandonment by her fiancé. In her anger she declares, "I haven't got no right to live with folks no more...I've made my choice" (76). According to Mrs. Todd, she then "took a poor old boat that had been her father's and lo'ded in a few things, and off she put all alone, with a good land breeze, right out to sea" (66). Although the narrator does not journey with Joanna, she does understand on a personal

level the need to remove one's self from the surrounding community when she comments: "in the life of each of us....there is a place remote and islanded, and given to endless regret or secret happiness; we are each the uncompanioned hermit and recluse of an hour or a day" (82). She also identifies with Joanna on a personal level because she too, has removed herself from society in leaving her urban world for Dunnet Landing and in leaving Mrs. Todd's for the schoolhouse (Bell 73).

Fortunately for the narrator, who feared her removal to the schoolhouse would harm her relationship with the town, Dunnet Landing's members value the need for solitude. Instead of being resentful, Mrs. Todd becomes "more wistfully affectionate than ever" when the narrator expresses her desire to work outside of the home (7). When it is time for her visitor to return to her urban dwelling, Mrs. Todd shows acceptance of the narrator's choice by re-gifting the coral pin that Nathan intended for Joanna (Bell 73). After the narrator receives the coral pin, she realizes that the local population has also come to accept her strange mobility, just as the pin initially represented "the community's acceptance of Joanna's feelings" (Campbell, *Resisting* 39). The narrator begins to understand that Dunnet Landing's residents value mobility as a way to sustain relationships with others, but also as a means to fulfill one's individual needs.

Richard Cary argues that Joanna's move to her island symbolizes a town that has given up economic growth and dealings with the outside world (148). However, her absence does not promote or even symbolize a dying community. Instead, her mobility brings the town's inhabitants closer through their concern for her well-being. Readers first see compassion for Joanna when Mrs. Todd warns Mrs. Fosdick not to speak badly of the

“nun or hermit person” (65). The two women regard Joanna’s move not as a rejection of the town but as a retreat from personal pain. Even after her departure, there were still “a good many old friends [who] had Joanna on their minds” such as the Green Island inhabitants who watched Joanna’s island for signs of life (67). Mrs. Todd explains how everyone learned to show compassion towards Joanna while still valuing her wishes observing that “nobody trespassed on her; all the folks about the bay respected her an’ her feelings; but as time wore on... one after another ventured to make occasion to put somethin’ ashore for her if they went that way” (77).

In many ways, Joanna’s escape is not tragic, but an act of agency in which she reclaims the dignity her previous suitor stole. Rather than shun her for this reclamation, the narrator recognizes the town’s appreciation for “such personal freedom and voluntary heritage” (69). Anita Duneer claims that in living as she sees fit, Joanna is a “modern-day Robinson Crusoe” who demonstrates a “limited” pioneer spirit (228). However, Joanna’s autonomy is not “limited”; even though she might lack company, she still lives as she pleases while retaining her fellow residents’ respect and compassion. Thus, Joanna’s mobility represents a unique mixture of individual identity and communal affiliation. Perhaps for this reason, the narrator becomes so fascinated with the exile that she goes to Joanna’s grave. She empathizes with Joanna’s desire for solitude and the way she balances privacy with communal affiliation.

The narrator connects not only with Joanna through her story of exile, but also with Captain Littlepage after listening to his tales of sea travel. As with Joanna, the narrator does not need to physically move through space with the Captain to comprehend

his excitement for unexplored regions. Rather, the mere act of hearing his stories brings the characters closer. Zagarell effectively emphasizes storytelling's significant role in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*:

[it] reinscribes numerous community boundaries: it provides a way to embrace recalcitrant or resistant members; it reweaves community bonds; it preserves and transmits the community's culture. In maintaining these boundaries, storytelling...implicitly draws a circle around the community, in effect keeping out the kind of person who cannot understand its language. (Zagarell, "*Country's Portrayal*" 48)

While the narrator relates to locals through all of their storytelling, narratives about mobility play a special role in initiating her into the Dunnet family by allowing her to bond with fellow voyagers. When Captain Littlepage visits the narrator in the schoolhouse, she is already predisposed to appreciate his stories of the sea because "she herself has made such a voyage to Dunnet Landing" (Pryse, Introduction xiv). Although she initially finds his tales somewhat boring, the narrator starts to relate to him more after hearing about his love of travel. She comments that "the dulled look in his eyes had gone" and starts to see him as more exciting (22).

Just as the narrator relates to Littlepage through his stories of sea travel, he relates to his friend, Gaffett, by listening to his narratives of mobility. When Gaffett feels he has gained Littlepage's trust after being stranded on an island together, the Scotsman tells Littlepage about his encounter with the strange Arctic country he discovered. In sharing this privileged information, Gaffett creates an unbreakable bond with Littlepage. The captain now bears the burden of Gaffett's discovery until he can find someone who believes in the project of recovering the ethereal region. Although Marilyn Wesley argues

that "Gaffett's tale leads to a dark place... of narcissistic self-absorption [that] is directly opposed to the striking inclusivity of the feminine journeys" (288), I argue that his tale helps him relate better to Captain Littlepage as fellow boatmen who have both seen miraculous things. Gaffett's story continues to unite people when the Captain retells it to the narrator. Even though the Captain and the narrator do not accompany Gaffett on his voyage, they move in a sense by proxy through its narrative existence; they feel an emotional connection to Gaffett's desire to explore unfamiliar spaces as travelers themselves.

The shared excitement of travel stories also unites the narrator to Mrs. Fosdick. When Mrs. Todd first introduces the two, she tells them, "no, nobody can't tell whether you'll suit each other, but I expect you'll get along some way, both having seen the world" (59). She assumes that the two women can relate to each other through a shared love of mobility. After chatting with Mrs. Fosdick (presumably about globe-trotting experiences), the narrator not only sees herself in the visitor, but also sees aspects of the mobile community she has come to love. The narrator notes, "I soon discovered that she, like many of the elder women of that coast, had spent a part of her life at sea, and was full of a good traveler's curiosity and enlightenment. By the time we thought it discreet to join our hostess we were already sincere friends" (59).

Thus, *The Country of the Pointed Firs* shows characters that bond through mobility without necessarily having to maneuver together through space. Narrated mobility creates friendships when the narrator empathizes with the others' desire for travel. On one level, *The Country of the Pointed Firs* tells the story of the narrator's



transition from outsider to insider within this small town. On a much larger level, the novel issues commentary about what sustains regional communities' exclusive membership. Many critics mistakenly accuse regional literature of perpetuating limited perspectives because of this exclusivity. However, the narrator's journeys through Dunnet Landing show that this assumption about regionalism is not always true.

### **Expanding Regions**

I have previously argued that characters' mobility sustains bonds in ways that shared ethnicities, gendered concerns, and economic positions cannot within Jewett's novel. Because acceptance within the town must be earned by maneuvering through space rather than by simply inhabiting a common ethnicity, race, or gender, Dunnet Landing's social structure takes on complex if not elusive nature. The intricate systems of designating belonging in Dunnet Landing show how regional communities are not limited in scope or easy to define.

This section will explain regionalism's association with limited communities. It also demonstrates Jewett's own resistance to reductive, essentializing concepts in her life and concludes with utilizing the narrator's movements to show the multifaceted nature of Dunnet Landing's community. Through the narrator's mobility, Jewett's novel models how we might read regionalism as a literature capable of depicting more complex communities than critics have initially thought. The subsequent chapters on Helen Hunt Jackson, Sarah Barnwell Elliott and Sui Sin Far's writing will further explore the complexity of regional communities in terms of class and ethnicity, but Jewett's novel

helps begin the conversation by pointing out that regional communities are often more demographically diverse and less contained than scholars have claimed. As an extension of these diverse locales, the literary genre of regionalism that represents these spaces becomes more aesthetically complex as well.

Regionalism's presumed penchant for a simple literary style that depicts even simpler local communities stems from its supposedly "sub-literary" status denoted by works that were "petty, cute, hokey – a rather bizarre flash in the literary pan which merits little or no serious consideration," ultimately lacking the aesthetic merit of timeless masterpieces (Petry 111; Comer 111). Furthermore, with its focus on a specific locale and audience, "regionalism is envisioned as a *limited* form, just as 'local color' is seen, sometimes pejoratively...as a minor literature associated with local places, 'little' forms, and women" (Gillman 101, emphasis added).

Even when trying to redeem regionalism from its supposed spatial and cultural limitations, some critics inadvertently reinforce its small-scale scope. Alice Hall Petry argues that regionalists tried to expand their focus by adopting broad human values such as honor, heroism, stoicism, adaptability, and responsibility to one's community (111, 112). However, saying they espouse common values reduces the writing to a moralistic, prescriptive genre that does not capture regionalism's depth. Fetterley and Pryse also try to rescue the genre from its marginalized status by arguing for its interest in social issues that extend beyond the region. They see it as a reforming genre that offers "a vantage point within the network of power relations that provides a location for critique and resistance" (*Writing Out of Place* 11). Their analysis brilliantly allows for multiple power

relations, but sadly only permits one vantage point from which a regional narrator can challenge hegemonic forces. That vantage point is the local perspective; it remains limited as long as we fail to consider how people traveling into, through, and away from the literary region shape the texts.

Based on what we know about Jewett's aesthetics, she might not have been comfortable associating regionalism with a singleness of vision (Howard 18). She valued multiplicity not just in content, but in style, appreciating equally imagination and depiction of everyday realities (Howard 18). She wrote to a young writer about this aesthetic vision, calling it "Imaginative Realism" (94). In this 1894 correspondence she advocates using real-life experiences, but also cautions against relying too heavily on realism lest "the typical man or woman" become "the specimen" (91). With "Imaginative Realism," Jewett's writing encompasses the real and the incredible. For Jewett, limiting one's self to a single, reductive form by choosing either realism or fantasy was akin to an aesthetic crime as Horace Scudder notes, arguing that even within "the limits of her art," Jewett refused to rely on "any conventional device of rounding out her story" (18). Rejecting a limited style of writing enabled Jewett to create a multifaceted regionalism with social systems as complicated as the literary form in which they are embodied.

Both in her writing and in her life, Jewett problematized limited perspectives, especially those held about women's mobility. During Jewett's lifetime, "travel abroad [for women] was a sign of conspicuous consumption and never ... the quest of the weary imagination for a fresh perspective" (Buchan 92). Jewett led a very mobile life and as noted earlier, gained perspective from the relationships that travel enabled. She showed

that women left home for more reasons than to demonstrate wealth; like men, they maneuvered through space to gain a broader understanding of the world around them. Jewett not only challenged simplistic ideas about women's mobility, but also reductive notions about female artists who chose to stay in a single location. Historically, when a man wanted to write, he "could withdraw to a cottage so as to get his work done and be given credit for common sense" (Buchan 92). When a woman secluded herself to write, she "was merely limiting her observation by staying at home in a village" (Buchan 92). As A.M. Buchan notes, Jewett liked to stay at home and write at her desk in South Berwick just as much as she liked to explore new settings; however, doing so did not limit her vision. As with her texts, Jewett's lifestyle insisted on varied "vantage points" that challenged simplistic views about women's putatively natural spaces.

Unfortunately, resisting accusations of limited perspective was not easy for Jewett as a woman and as a regionalist author. Her, Edward Garnett, values her insight into female relationships but complains that the author cannot see beyond this theme (23). He continues to devalue Jewett's artistic vision by juxtaposing her work with Nathaniel Hawthorne's, saying that "in originality of vision and in intense and passionate creative force she is, of course, not to be compared with him. The range of her insight is undeniably restricted" (24).<sup>vii</sup> Turn-of-the-century critics not only saw Jewett's work as lacking in "insight" and "originality," but also in suspense. According to a 1929 review of Jewett's work, she "lacked...a sense of the truly dramatic and above all a sense of tragedy. Her world is too placid; too much a world where a walk down the street is an adventure to seem quite comprehensive" (Grattan 83). This review fails to realize Jewett's interest in

the casual “walk down the street.” For her novel, these minor moments of mobility actively sustain a diverse population.

As with other regional works, Jewett's so-called "singleness" of "vision" gets mistaken for a lack of universal appeal and aesthetic grandeur. In the often quoted passage from an essay about James T. Field, Henry James heralds *The Country of the Pointed Firs* as a "beautiful little quantum of achievement" (174). Although he praises Jewett's craft, his miniaturization of the novel makes it seem like a tiny piece of what real art should be. Even Marjorie Pryse, whose work has solidified Jewett's place in the American canon, still notes that “although *The Country of the Pointed Firs* is considered Jewett's masterpiece, it is a ‘little one,’ *limited* in scope, like the size of its cult of readers” (Introduction vi, emphasis added). Pryse might initially refer to the novel's short length; however, her reference to Jewett's small-scale, cultish following makes the “limited in scope” novel seem as if it only appeals to a devoted few. The critics who see *The Country of the Pointed Firs* as narrow in form and theme neglect the complexity of Jewett's writing style and her creation of multifaceted communities that resist geographic containment and demographic homogeneity.

The narrator's own movement through the town's spaces helps her develop varied perspectives of a community that is far from limited. In viewing regions as bounded, miniature, minor, focused solely on local concerns, and anti-modern, contemporary critics conceptualize them just as narratologists view flat characters – limited in development and resistant to change. However, the narrator's movement enables her to read the local neighborhood as more rounded. When the narrator first arrives, she sees the

village as isolated from the outside world. Once she settles in Mrs. Todd's house, she starts to see Dunnet Landing as a bustling, busy location. The narrator's school house perch then reveals a region that is not only active but also unfixed in its geographic boundaries. The narrator's trip to and from Green Island offers additional perspectives of the town; these new views enable her to conceptualize the community as a little continent and an amorphous space. Finally, the narrator's departing view establishes the village as a small metropolis, akin to London. From the vantage points her mobility grants her, the narrator starts to see why Captain Littlepage would quote Milton, calling the region "a happy, rural seat of various views" (16); it is not nearly as spatially and focally bounded as she initially supposes, showing that perhaps regionalist critics misjudge the ostensibly limited nature of literary regions such as Dunnet Landing.

Through mobility, the narrator gains many physical views of the region, but she also practices the narratological device of focalization when viewing the region as a multifaceted space that resists conceptual limitations. Focalization goes beyond that which can be observed through sight by encompassing not just the observed object (the focalized) but also the object doing the viewing (the focalizer) into a symbiotic relationship of perception.<sup>viii</sup> Aside from considering the narrator's positioning relative to the community, focalization also considers the cognitive and emotional properties of the focalizer that may enable a more empathetic connection with the object viewed (Herman and Vervaeck 77). Finally, focalization is the way a text presents information to a reader (Herman and Vervaeck 70).

Prior to her arrival, the narrator has a very limited understanding of the region. She sees it only briefly while traveling on a pleasure cruise. When she first arrives at Dunnet Landing, she fails to take in the community's depth. Her impression of the space reveals its "quaintness of the village with its elaborate conventionalities; ... [and] all that mixture of remoteness" (2). The narrator's initial encounter does not account for any spatial or cultural expanse; rather, she conceptualizes the region as a tiny "village" that possesses the "childish certainty of being the centre of civilization" (2). Illustrating the narrator's initially limited focalization, the text's narrative voice changes from third-person, to second, and finally to first by the second chapter as she becomes better acquainted with her surroundings.

Paul Voelker asserts that this narratological switch shows the narrator's growth, arguing that when the third-person narrative voice occurs, "the first-person narrator cannot yet make such an observation" as an inchoate being (239). However, more than personal growth, the change in point of view illustrates the narrator's growing understanding of the community and subsequent belonging. Changing from third-person narration to first-person helps the focalizer develop from external (one outside the action) to internal (one belonging to the action) (Herman and Vervaeck 71). Although the narrator is not always the focalizer, in this case the two are the same and the narrative switch indicates her increased familiarity with the region. Once the narrator articulates her perceptions in her own words, Mrs. Todd's garden is no longer the "queer" space the omniscient narrator describes (3). With the novel now in the narrator's hands, a world once conceived of as "childish" becomes large enough to boast a "complete lack of

seclusion" within Mrs. Todd's residence (3). At this point, the "centre of civilization" has become less of an abstraction and more of a knowable region, bustling with inhabitants. While the narrator thought the sleepy town would provide a summer's escape from modern chaos, she realizes quickly that there is nothing dull or static about this population that barrages Mrs. Todd's house with company. The narrator's increasing awareness of the town's complexity invites readers to reconsider notions about regionalism's depiction of towns that are supposedly limited in diversity and interests.

While the narrator's settlement in Mrs. Todd's house complicates her original perceptions of the town, mobility is what really changes her vision of the region. When she hikes from Mrs. Todd's to the school house, she observes from the hill that "the community is larger than the village, including scattered farms for miles around ... at the end of a day's fishing a hundred sails can be seen making for shore" (Blanchard 280). Here, the region is no longer centered around the small town, but expanding outward towards the sea. Later with Mrs. Todd, she sees the "long stretches of shore all covered by the great army of the pointed firs, darkly cloaked and standing as if they waited to embark...seaward still" (29). The focalization seaward that started with the view from the school house continues with the advancing trees. Like the community's members, the trees will not be contained, but instead march to the sea. The sunburst over Mrs. Blackett's house reminds the narrator of a celestial world beyond the one she inhabits, further extending the region from the real into the imaginative realm (30). Thus, the region becomes less a knowable space of totality and more a location of un-fixity.



The journey to Green Island offers the narrator another new perspective (both visually and focally). Once her movement enables her to meet the charming Blackett family, the town grows from a quaint village into a "tiny continent" (39). Through this focalization, she realizes that the region possesses even more unique geographic spaces and people than she initially thought. After her walk with William, the narrator receives another view that expands regional boundaries. While standing on the ledge of Green Island with William, she feels "a sudden sense of space, for nothing stopped the eye or hedged one in, -- that sense of liberty in space and time which great prospects always give" (45). At this point, even though the narrator is technically not enacting panoramic focalization (a form of perception that involves an external focalizer who essentially sees and knows all) (Rimmon-Kenan 79), her conceptualization of the community has become panoramic with the town's expansive boundaries. It is truly an unbounded region with nothing to stop "the eye." While not all regional texts follow Jewett's example of an unbounded, unlimited regional space, the narrator's growing awareness of the region's complexity shows the possibility of such spaces.

Now the town that was formerly a continent has grown to unbounded proportions. Like the narrator's view from the Green Island ledge, the town becomes all-encompassing. The narrator's perspective changes once more when she sees Dunnet Landing as "large and noisy and oppressive" after returning from Green Island (55). At this point, the village has started to mirror her urban home. The narrator's continually changing vision establishes a deeper understanding of the town's multifaceted nature.

Rather than being limited in scope, the coastal town becomes simultaneously rural and urban, depending on the narrator's standpoint.

The novel's final chapter is called "The Backward View," indicating its investment in perspective. Looking backwards, the narrator sees how Dunnet Landing has changed with each journey through the region. She notes the limitations of her early perspectives: "once I had not even known where to go for a walk" (129). Yet after a summer moving through the region she understands that "there were many delightful things to be done and done again, as if I were in London" (129). Through the observance of different communal spaces, the town has developed in the narrator's mind from a little town, to a small continent, to a boundless space, to something that resembles the metropolitan city of "London."

Through the narrator's alternating focal points, Jewett's novel depicts a community that challenges regionalism's supposed perpetuation of limited spaces and containment over geographic and cultural expanse. Regionalism's social critique depends on its ability to defy conceptual limitations. If regionalism only perpetuates a single, limited perspective, it risks reinstating hegemonic narratives, thus diminishing its potential as a libratory genre that destabilizes hierarchies of race, class, and ethnicity.

### **How Characters' Mobility Resists Homogeneous Spaces**

Regionalist critics often see the genre as limited in perspective due to its interest in a smaller, localized population. Also, because this population resides in a single space and often shares cultural values, some twentieth-century literary critics assume regional

residents to be demographically homogeneous. For example, Richard Cary says that Dunnet Landing's many rituals such as funerals, family reunions, and expected visits provide a sense of "profound and ageless homogeneity" (150). These rituals create a sense of timelessness and cultural solidarity for the "long-lived, stable and homogeneous community" (Zagarell, "*Country's Portrayal*" 43).

However, Jewett's novel problematizes a regionalism that turns inwards to preserve homogeneity. Instead, her work uses mobility to destabilize universalizing forces that come from *outside* the community rather than within. Through its inhabitants' journeys, the coastal town maintains a distinct culture that the outside world cannot provide. Ultimately, Jewett asks readers to reassess regionalism's ostensible obsession with demographically unified populations. Reading for diversity in regionalism helps restructure the genre as less reactive to the chaotic forces of modernity and more proactive in its resistance to modernity's homogenizing tendencies.

Rather than seek an urbanized, nationalized uniformity, regional texts privilege local diversity (Robison 62). In his 1908 book, *Race Questions, Provincialism and Other American Problems*, Josiah Royce presents regionalism as a solution to modernity's universalizing effects:

Because of the ease of communication amongst distant places, and the centralization of popular education, and because of the consolidation and the centralization of industries and of social authorities, we tend all over the nation, and, in some degree, even throughout the civilized world, to read the same daily news, to share the same general ideas, to submit to the same overmastering social forces, to live in the same external fashions, to discourage individuality, and to approach a dead level of harassed mediocrity ... Provincial pride helps the individual man to keep his self-respect even when the vast forces that work toward industrial consolidation, and toward the effacement of individual

initiative, are besetting his life at every turn...Give man the local community that he loves and cherishes...and you have given him a power to counteract the leveling tendencies of modern civilization. (74 - 75)

Jewett's novel affirms Royce's assertion that "provincial pride" can beset "the leveling tendencies of modern civilization," but it takes his assertion one step further by demonstrating mobility's power to sustain a heterogeneous local community. The region in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* safeguards its diversity by embracing both characters moving *into* and *within* its boundaries.

Dunnet Landing is an exclusive community in that one has to maneuver through space with existing members to join, but it is not so exclusive that membership becomes impossible, as Sandra Zagarell asserts ("*Country's* Portrayal" 45). The town's acceptance of the narrator is evidence that it does not refuse newcomers. Instead, it uses its inhabitants' mobility to resist the homogeneity that people fear as a result of modernity. The town does not defy modernity by fixing itself in the past, an issue I take up in the subsequent chapter. Such nostalgia means the death of the community while the town actually maintains its present liveliness through a mobile, diverse population.

Mrs. Fosdick exemplifies this fear of modernity's homogenizing forces, noting that "everybody's just like everybody else, now; nobody to laugh about, and nobody to cry about" (64). However, the narrator counters Mrs. Fosdick's assertion, thinking "there were peculiarities of character in the region of Dunnet Landing yet," with reference to Captain Littlepage and Joanna (64). It is no coincidence that two of the region's most unusual characters surface at this time in the narrator's thoughts. While Mrs. Fosdick

fears that the region has fallen to the outside world's homogenizing systems, the narrator's mobility has shown her the town's true diversity.

Maintaining diversity through mobility is not a new practice for this coastal town. Captain Littlepage tells the narrator how the region's shipping industry helped the community understand cultures beyond their own, reminiscing about how:

in the old days, a good part o' the best men here knew a hundred ports and something of the way folks lived in them. They saw the world for themselves, and like's not their wives and children saw it with them. They may not have had the best of knowledge to carry with 'em sight-seein', but they were acquainted with foreign lands an' their laws, an' could see outside the battle for town clerk here in Dunnet. (20)

The town's mobility as a popular port gives it a "sense o' proportion" that modernity's homogenizing forces lack (20). Like Mrs. Fosdick, Littlepage worries that the community is losing its diversity to the larger society's rapid industrialization. He frets over the introduction of bicycles, fearing that they "don't afford no real opportunities of experience such as a man gained on a voyage" (21). Littlepage suspects that Dunnet Landing has now turned its mobility inward, neglecting the wide array of world experiences that could make the region more culturally heterogeneous. However, instead of closing its borders to the outside world, the region still accepts new members (albeit with caution). Without these porous borders, the narrator could never become the town's honorary resident. As a writer from an urban environment, she also brings diversity to the neighborhood.

Some scholars have critiqued Jewett's Dunnet Landing for its lack of ethnic diversity.<sup>ix</sup> Sandra Zagarell claims that we cannot discuss the town's sense of community

without considering the ways race and ethnicity shape belonging (*Country's Portrayal* 40). In chapter three, I contrast Jewett's hesitancy to talk about race with Jackson's overt critique of racial prejudices. However, contrary to what Elizabeth Ammons asserts, the absence of racial difference in Dunnet Landing might not stem from Jewett's intent to privilege the Anglo-Norman race ("Material Culture" 92). Rather, just as Jewett's novel troubles presumably fixed regional boundaries, it also destabilizes traditional qualifiers of diversity such as race, class, and ethnicity. Instead of creating a community where racial and ethnic Others join the cultural melting pot, Jewett's society reworks diversity by calling for a broader tolerance of all its members, regardless of their race, ethnicity or idiosyncrasies. For example, even as the ladies gossip about Mari' Harris, the wise Mrs. Blackett admonishes, "live and let live" (103). Although Mari' Harris resembles a foreigner, she receives the same acceptance that other socially different characters such as Elijah Tilley and Captain Littlepage earn. The town facilitates this tolerance through movement or stories of movement. For example, Mrs. Todd's visit to Poor Joanna's island helps her feel empathy for Joanna's self-seclusion. The narrator's walks with William help her understand his elusive shyness. When the narrator hears of Captain Littlepage's adventures with Gaffet, she appreciates his capacity for storytelling despite his weird quirks.

Josephine Donovan notes that regional literature has always tolerated idiosyncratic populations, respecting "regional particularities and eccentricities...local differences in setting, clothing, manners, and dialect" ("Breaking" 223). However, these differences are always established in relation to the "normalized" society outside of the

region. Jewett's text argues for a heterogeneity that is inherent to the region rather than a reaction to the larger nation's "normalcy." Nor does the region resist the larger industrial society's homogenizing tendencies by closing its borders. Instead, the town accepts outsiders, counting on the strength of its own diverse population to maintain its heterogeneity. In the following chapters, I show how Dunnet Landing's heterogeneity helps frame the diversity of other regional communities. In Jackson's *Ramona*, Alessandro's tribe accepts the biracial Ramona without question, simply because she embraces the community's lifestyle. Sarah Barnwell Elliott's *The Durket Sperret* presents a community whose diversity is rooted in economic stratification. Finally, as in Dunnet Landing, the inhabitants of Sui Sin Far's Chinatowns also accept diverse outsiders, such as Mrs. McLeod in "The Gift of Little Me," and Carson from "Its Wavering Image." Similar to Jewett's coastal community, none of these regions close their geopolitical borders to keep outsiders out.

In offering a diverse community of multiple perspectives, *The Country of the Pointed Firs* destabilizes myths about regionalism's limited focus and homogenized local populations. Aside from challenging assumptions about regionalist literature, the novel also suggests new ways of reading geographic regions; ultimately, it reveals that we should not see regions as limited in focus and diversity, lest we reduce the spaces to monotonous "spots on the map" (Gupta and Ferguson 10). Thinking of regions as fixed "spots on the map" is dangerous for several reasons. First, if a region is reduced to a mappable location rather than allowed to exist as a complex culture, this reduction silences the diverse voices regionalist texts portray. As the following chapters will show,

a large aspect of regionalism's cultural work depends on the representation of marginalized voices omitted from the dominant narrative. Concerning Jackson's *Ramona*, I discuss the marginalization of Native Americans. Chapter four on Sarah Barnwell Elliott's *The Durket Sperret* investigates the abject nature of impoverished Appalachians; and my analysis of Sui Sin Far's *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* illuminates the plight of immobilized Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans at the turn of the century.

We should also avoid making regional cultures into isolated pinpoints on a map because when we view local spaces as stand-alone units, we cannot see patterns of cultural stereotypes emerging. For example, nineteenth-century clergyman, Josiah Strong, once claimed that Jewett's isolated New England suffered from "the same illiteracy, the same ignorance of the Christian religion, the same vices...which characterize the mountain whites of the South" (qtd. in Barron 39). Strong's statement is ironic because he superficially speaks of New England's cultural alienation while placing the region in conversation with Appalachia (thus negating New England's separation from other spaces). While Strong's claim about the two regions' isolation is suspect, he does make a valuable move (that many regionalist texts perform) by seeking patterns across local spaces. Showing the larger nation's marginalization of local spaces, his assertion demonstrates that multiple locations such as New England and Appalachia suffered from the same essentializing stereotypes.

Reducing regional cultures to "spots" on the map is problematic because they become immobile and fixed. We cannot let reductive, essentializing theories about



regionalism force multifaceted regions into pre-existing molds. As E. M. Forster writes in

*Aspects of the Novel*:

Provincialism ... in a writer may indeed be the chief source of his strength...But provincialism in a critic is a serious fault. A critic has no right to the narrowness which is the frequent prerogative of the creative artist. He has to have a wide outlook or he has not anything at all. (8-9)

Regional writers can describe small towns in which the population shares common values. But contemporary critics should not misinterpret depictions of these towns as perpetuating cultures that are limited, minute, or obsessed with homogeneity. Such reductive thinking represents a provincialism of critical thought that many regionalist texts resist. "Provincial" only equates with regionalism when critics limit the genre's depiction of unbounded, diverse local spaces

## Notes

<sup>i</sup> In *Cultures of Letters*, Richard Brodhead argues that Jewett's novel "is oriented toward a place, but it establishes this place not in its own terms but as a place to come to, a place literally of resort for a narrator who comes from afar" (145). As a tourist, the narrator struggles with her desire to belong and her need to "construct as strange and foreign the population of Dunnet Landing" (Foote, *Regional* 18). Other scholars such as Philip Joseph and Marilyn Wesley affirm the novel's status as a travel narrative but disagree with critics such as Brodhead and Foote about the narrator's exoticization of the town. Joseph asserts that *The Country of the Pointed Firs* follows the format of the traditional travel narrative but then through the narrator's desire to belong reverses the potential of such texts to otherize the locals (*American* 23). Similarly, Wesley claims that *The Country of the Pointed Firs* restructures the masculine travel narrative into the quest for female fellowship rather than the journey of alienation from the community (288).

<sup>ii</sup> Mobley's 1986 article, "Rituals of Flight and Return: The Ironic Journeys of Sarah Orne Jewett's Female Characters" argues that the author's texts often use motifs of flight to represent the female characters' conflicted emotions about the regions they inhabit. While some of the characters may emotionally and physically abandon their regional homelands, they ultimately return to their roots. Marilyn C. Wesley's article, "The Genteel Picara: The Ethical Imperative in Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs*," argues that the novel remodels the picaresque form to establish a female ethic that blurs the line between domestic and public spaces. With this reworking of the picaresque form, the story becomes less about the narrator's personal journey and more

about bonding with Mrs. Todd, a role model for merging one's public and domestic identity (5). Wesley accurately asserts that Jewett's "'Angels in the House' simply do not stay put!" once travel becomes a way to assert a public (yet still appropriately domestic) identity. However, Wesley does not extend her argument far enough. I argue that Jewett's "Angels" are not the only ones in the town who refuse to "stay put." While movement does highlight issues of gender, travel is not a solely feminine act in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*; the bond of human connectivity that sustains Dunnet Landing depends on travel of various sorts from multiple community members.

iii. Coby Dowdell argues, "rather than expressing a harmonious consolidation of community, Jewett's text focuses on the isolation of the citizen from his/her community" citing the case of Poor Joanna as the primary example of social alienation (210).

Likewise, Michael Davitt Bell argues that we forget the characters' moments of isolation in our desire to read the novel as a collective narrative (72).

iv. Narratives of community include a disregard for linear development and geographic fixity. Zagarell also observes that this genre contrasts the community and the outer world, saying that first and foremost, it depicts "the life of a community," portraying "the minute and quite ordinary processes through which the community maintains itself as an entity" instead of illustrating the development of an individual character ("Narrative" 499).

v. There are some dangers in labeling Dunnet Landing's spaces as destinations for pilgrims. Sites of pilgrimage have the tendency to become spatially rooted as places that seekers ritualistically visit. The space's identity can disappear once pilgrims invest the site with their own interpretations of its spiritual meaning, thus making the spaces

“fungible as mobile signifiers” of the pilgrims’ desires (Greenblatt 5). As someone who travels to Dunnet Landing seeking something unknown to her urban environment, the narrator risks becoming a pilgrim who reads her own desires onto the coastal town. To avoid making Dunnet Landing a “fungible signifier” of the tourists’ desires, the narrator must realize “her own elastic capacity for inclusion of local difference” (Joseph, “Landed and Literary” 153). She must avoid exoticizing the town’s strangeness or commodifying its routine, peaceful way of life. Instead, she has to set “herself in the task of adapting to Dunnet culture for the period of her sojourn” (Joseph, “Landed and Literary” 153).

<sup>vi.</sup> Not every critic sees mobility as the glue that maintains Dunnet Landing’s communal network. Elizabeth Ammons argues that Dunnet Landing’s members bond through “female psychic patterns” of empathy (“Going in Circles” 82). Sandra Zagarell says that the characters connect through regional affiliation as “longtime Maine residents” (“*Country’s* Portrayal” 40). Other critics such as Richard Brodhead, Phillip Joseph, and Susan Gillman argue for a communal loyalty based on shared class, racial, and/or ethnic origins.

<sup>vii.</sup> In contrast, Willa Cather wrote in her 1925 preface to *The Country of the Pointed Firs* that “if I were asked to name three American books which have the possibility of a long, long life, I would say at once *The Scarlet Letter*, *Huckleberry Finn*, and *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. I can think of no others that confront time and change so serenely. The latter book seems to me fairly to shine with the reflection of its long, joyous future.” Cather has no qualms about placing Jewett in the same category as Hawthorne and Twain, two writers historically associated with timeless works.

<sup>viii.</sup> Not all critics believe that the subject and object of focalization share a symbiotic relationship. Because I think the two elements are mutually defining, I follow the analysis of French narratologist, Gerard Genette, who often conflates the two concepts. However, Mieke Bal has revised Genette's analysis, declaring the necessity of keeping the two separate, an analytical approach that has become widely accepted in narratology (Herman and Vervaeke 69). Focalization is also problematic because it assumes that texts have "distinct centers" of perspective (Herman and Vervaeke 71). However, I continue to use it over "view" because of its consideration of the focalizer's thoughts and emotional connection to the inspected object.

<sup>ix.</sup> For example, Sandra Zagarell argues that Dunnet Landing's community privileges an Anglo-Norman racial homogeneity ("*Country's Portrayal*" 42). Given South Berwick's proximity to textile mills that employed many Irish immigrants, she finds it odd that Jewett neglected to mention this population and instead highlighted the Bowden clan's Nordic background ("*Country's Portrayal*" 44, 48). In a similar manner, Elizabeth Ammons argues that the Bowden reunion represents not the celebration of family ties, but of a British and Norman imperialism that eradicated the land's indigenous population ("*Material*" 92). More than simple cultural homogeneity, Ammons reads traces of racism and ethocentrism in Mrs. Todd's talks about Shell-heap Island's Indians ("*Material*" 92).

CHAPTER III  
MOBILITY AS AGENCY AND NATIVE SOVEREIGNTY IN HELEN HUNT  
JACKSON'S *RAMONA*

In the late nineteenth century, hordes of tourists ventured westward, seeking the “authentic” sites that inspired Jackson’s 1884 novel, *Ramona*. By 1890, southern California boasted two adobes advertised as the heroine’s official home and another site labeled, “Ramona’s Marriage Place” (DeLyser xi). Innumerable sightseers bought Ramona teaspoons, Ramona rosaries cases, and Ramona pottery (DeLyser xii). Many took pictures and sent postcards depicting these literary landmarks (DeLyser xii). Guidebooks, newspaper articles, and booklets about the sites proliferated, enticing other tourists to see these fascinating locales for themselves (DeLyser xi). Similar to *The Country of the Pointed Firs* in which the characters’ movement connects the people of Dunnet Landing, the tourists’ journeys to see *Ramona* attractions bonded a literary community of disparate individuals who all fell in love with the same novel.

While the rapid growth of *Ramona* pilgrims shows the positive ways in which mobility can sustain a community, the novel also depicts a darker side of human movement. Contemporary readers may have heard about early twentieth-century readers’ obsession with *Ramona*, but they might not know that the novel inadvertently aided a “flurry of regional promotion” (DeLyser xi). This boosterism invited “upper and middle-class white tourists and home seekers” into California who transformed the region “into a

seat of Anglo population and power” that displaced many Californios and Native Americans (DeLyser xi). This early twentieth-century settlement was an extension of the earlier colonialism Jackson details in her novel. Reading for moments of mobility in *Ramona* exposes the inherently mobile nature of imperialism and its ability to transcend spatial designations. If we neglect this transcendence, we risk fixing colonized cultures and people in space, neglecting the ways Anglo settlers use mobility to take land from Native peoples. We also miss Ramona’s mobility which engenders the agency to resist their encroachment.

In the first half of this chapter, I argue that the novel's depictions of mobility reveal the characters' resistance to victimhood and assimilation. By traveling to different homesteads, Ramona evidences a sovereignty that contradicts an imperializing domesticity dependent on restricting Native spaces. The sovereignty that the characters' movements call for is not a self-rule legislated through documents, but rather an organic sovereignty that comes from negotiating physical spaces. Acknowledging Ramona's movement also enables a critique of scholars who argue that the novel's sentimentalism detracts from its political critique. Ramona's travels garner sympathy for the dispossessed figure while still asserting the agency to remove herself from an oppressive situation. I conclude my treatment of Ramona's mobility by showing that her final move to Mexico validates her agency rather than reinforces the myth of the Disappearing Native, as many critics have previously assumed.

In the second half of the chapter, I use Ramona's movement to challenge scholars' assumptions about how regionalism relies on locatedness to issue social critique; in

*Ramona*, dislocation facilitates a critique of the mistreatment of indigenous communities. My reading of *Ramona*'s dislocation also shows that not every regionalist text obsessed over the cultural authenticity and nostalgia that comes with pinning people in contained spaces. Finally, I show how the text's reliance on mobility anticipates scholarship of the twentieth and twenty-first century that views regions as metaphors for Native communities and as sites of cultural ambiguity rather than fixity. Ultimately, by reading regions as locations of cultural creation rather than authentication, I argue that Jackson's text foreshadows future regional scholarship that seeks to integrate the local into a global world of fluid cultures, populations, and geographic boundaries.

### **The Agency of *Ramona*'s Relocations**

While I assert that Jackson's regionalism enhances her social critique, many critics argue that that *Ramona*'s interest in landscape and scenery cheapens its reform agenda. Some, like Brian Norman and Valerie Matthes, claim that it did not incite "political change, either in public policy or in national sentiment," but rather became "a stock symbol of southern California's chambers of commerce and tourist bureaus" for travelers who wanted to see where the "real" *Ramona* lived (116; x). Bryan Wagner even asserts that *Ramona* is a case of local color gone wrong, in which the land's natural beauty neutralizes injustices to Native peoples (1). However, I argue that Jackson's detailed depictions of the region show the ground that the Native peoples had to cover when ousted from their homeland.



I begin by calling attention to the many moments when Ramona chooses to leave oppressive spaces. The beauty of these regional spaces, such as the Moreno estate, the town of San Pasquale, and the village of Saboba, are enough to make any tourist salivate. While aesthetically appealing, these sites also facilitate an interiority and agency that other critics find lacking in Ramona's character. The chronological order of Ramona's journeys shows her unhappiness with an oppressive system that wants to situate her in a single space. Through the heroine's many relocations from the Moreno estate, San Pasquale, the Saboba village, and the San Jacinto mountain, the novel reaffirms regionalist writing's ability to "challenge the cultural forms and ideological functions of a world that threatens to silence female, non-white, and non-dominant 'regional' voices" (Dowdell 213). This quest for agency is meaningful not only for Ramona, but also for the Native culture that she adopts.<sup>i</sup>

By falsely equating Jackson's sentimental rhetoric with victimization, many of *Ramona's* readers do not see the characters as active agents who decide their fates. John Harvard argues adamantly for their passivity: "Ramona and Alessandro are totally stripped of their agency during their travels...[they] undertake their painful travels due to no action of their own, but rather due to the actions of others" (107). According to Michael Dorris, Ramona and Alessandro lack "power over their destinies" and "must depend upon the goodwill or sympathy of others in order to survive" (xii). Others claim that the Native characters are "forced onto land on which they are destined to die" and "driven by the American onrush" into a "literal odyssey of woes" (King 14; Nevins 280). Even Jackson herself found the Mission Indians "helpless" during her stint as Special

Commissioner of Indian Affairs (*Letters* 249). In 1883, she wrote that, "I do not know that much can be done for them ... the law being against them, it is disheartening to try and better their condition" (*Letters* 249). Nonetheless, two years earlier, she had published *A Century of Dishonor*, sending a copy to every member in Congress to appeal for legislative reform; a year after this letter, she published *Ramona*. These documents indicate that she did, in fact, see potential for change. Undoubtedly, she charged her white, educated, privileged readers with initiating the change; however, we cannot ignore the textual moments in which she also empowers her Native characters with the ability to enact change through mobility.

Since Ramona's agency to unsettle an oppressive situation is somewhat problematic, I need to clarify my usage of the term agency. Arguably, Ramona's many relocations in her quest for sovereignty really represent the removal of Native peoples from their homeland, or the ultimate *denial* of sovereignty. Brian Norman argues that rather than have Ramona flee from her homes, Jackson should have demanded the Native people's "right to occupancy" and the withdrawal of U.S. occupants (119). However, Jackson and Ramona both operated in worlds where a direct call for Native sovereignty would have fallen on deaf ears.

Jackson's *A Century of Dishonor* was mostly ignored in its demand for specific political intervention. She wrote to one of her correspondents that "in my *Century of Dishonor* I tried to attack people's consciences directly, and they would not listen. Now I have sugared my pill, and it remains to be seen if it will go down" (*Letters* 341). Jackson was rhetorically savvy enough to know that explicitly requesting the Anglo settlers'

removal would not go down as a “sugared pill.” Given the historical moment of the text's publication, Ramona had few options for resistance. She could resist with violence, passively submit to the laws, or leave the oppressive situation. Ramona opts for the latter, since large-scale resistance was infeasible (Senier, Introduction 21). A massive uprising would only “make it worse for us in the end,” Alessandro tells Ramona (199). Instead of physically rebelling or giving in, the heroine's resistance allows her to escape unharmed from Anglo settlement. The agency Ramona's retreat generates seems negligible given the sorrows her displacement causes, but it still merits recognition as a conscious choice to act for self-preservation. As I noted in the introduction, agency does not always mean victory over oppressive forces; it also means the negotiation of action within a dominant system (McNay 16). Movement is Ramona's action; it involves “making a choice within...the constraints of society” (Cresswell and Merriman 5).

To understand how Ramona's mobility can simultaneously represent subaltern agency and colonial displacement, it is helpful to consider what Jose Munoz calls “disidentification,” or the act of reconfiguring an oppressive situation into a site of self-creation. Disidentification, according to Munoz, “means to read oneself and one's own life narrative in a moment, object, or subject that is not culturally coded to ‘connect’ with the disidentifying subject” (12). Arguably, Ramona should not make a positive connection with the act of displacement. However, through the process of disidentification, we can reconfigure her dispossession as a simultaneous act of agency when she removes her family from an unfortunate situation. Munoz calls this practice a “survival strategy” for minority subjects who must negotiate “a majoritarian public sphere

that continuously elides and punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship" (4). As I explain later, Ramona will not obey a system of citizenship that privileges the theft of Native land. Instead she seeks a more affirming environment, even if it means living on top of the isolated San Jacinto Mountain.

To understand the subtleties of Ramona's resistance, it is helpful to conceive of her as an exile or a refugee. By definition, exiles must leave their homes; however, Edward Said notes that agency exists even within this forced movement "provided that the exile refuses to sit on the sidelines nursing a wound," adding that "there are things to be learned: he or she must cultivate a scrupulous (not indulgent or sulky) subjectivity" (184). So even if one must move, he or she has some control over *how* to move. Ramona's choice to remove herself from the U.S. represents this conscious choice. As I explain in chapter five through my analysis of Sui Sin Far's characters, movement is always connected to the nation-state and subsequently, the sovereignty that the nation-state claims. Nation-states perform their sovereignty by designating which refugees or exiles can stay in the country (Mountz 262). When Ramona relocates to spaces free of American influence, she negates the nation-state's power to define her refugee status. She becomes a sovereign figure when she assumes the power to decide her fate as a citizen. Thus, her displacement is still oppressive, but within that oppression, we can see the agency of acting for one's self despite controlling forces. Later in this chapter I explain in more detail how *Ramona* depicts displacement as an act of self-creation and subaltern agency.

I also acknowledge that as a mixed-race individual associated with Mexican aristocracy, Ramona has more options for negotiating her actions within the dominant system than members of Alessandro's tribe.<sup>ii</sup> However, Ramona's privilege should not necessarily negate the significance of her affiliation with a disenfranchised community. When she tells Alessandro that "your people are my people," she fully intends to live as a member of Alessandro's tribe (206). Despite her advantages, she suffers many of the same injustices other Native Americans experience. Ramona loses Alessandro just as Carmena lost her husband to a fit of insanity induced by the Anglos' arrival. Also like Carmena, Ramona loses her baby to conditions brought on by the Americans' settlement. Similar to other Indian women, Ramona must ward off the approaches of lascivious white settlers who seek a "squaw" concubine (322). When Carmena meets Ramona she speaks of their joint suffering saying, "One of us! One of us! Sorrow came to me; she rides to meet it" (244). Furthermore, while Ramona's connection to Felipe allows her a transnational mobility that many indigenous people lacked, other Native people were not completely immobile. When Alessandro's father first hears of violent altercations between the Indians and the whites, he sends "all his people away before that fight began" (247). Foreshadowing Ramona's many relocations, Alessandro's tribe moves from Temecula to Pachanga to avoid the Anglo interlopers (202). Others relocate to a village at the base of the San Jacinto Mountain (295). These movements represent the desire to survive in a system that wants to eradicate the Native presence.

In Alessandro, Ramona sees how mobility serves as a force of self-preservation. When white settlers enter San Pasquale, Alessandro sells his livestock before the Anglo

settlers can steal it, telling Ramona, "I would not wait for the Americans to sell it for me, and take the money. I have not got much, but it is better than nothing" (276-277). By selling his animals, he declines to give the whites the upper hand. As the couple passes Alessandro's former village of Temecula, he sees his friend's empty house. He tells Ramona, "I wish every house in the valley had been pulled down" to prevent Americans from occupying the building (244). By tearing down the existing houses, he wants to make settlement more difficult for the Anglos. Later in the village of Saboba, another white farmer asks why he should pay Alessandro for a house that the law will give him for free. Alessandro calmly responds with because, "I shall burn down the sheds and corrals, tear down the house; and before a blade of the wheat is reaped, I will burn that" (281). Even though he has little opportunity for resistance, Alessandro will not make the transition easier for the whites.

In these depictions of Alessandro's departures, we see his calculated resistance. The narrator notes that, "*deliberately*, lingeringly, he unharnessed the horses and put them in the corral. Then still more *deliberately*, lingeringly, he walked to the house" (279 emphasis added). Alessandro might be the victim, but he still makes the conscious choice to move of his own will by "deliberately" abandoning an unjust system. When a man asks him where he will go he responds with "I do not know where I shall go, but I will not stay here" (281). Alessandro would rather be homeless than see his land taken over. In making this choice, he opts for the lesser of two evils. Exile at least grants him an agency that he will not find with the settlers.

Alessandro models for Ramona how to leave colonized spaces, but many critics still see her as powerless to leave negative situations. Martin Padgett sees her as “innocent, joyous, generous, and industrious...[but] also childlike and without intellectual depth” (848). Michael Dorris more biting describes her as “lifeless, so uncomplex in her goodness, loyalty, [and] piety...that she exists more as a cipher than as flesh and blood” (xv). All of these critics acknowledge Ramona's lovely personality, but fail to recognize the strength she demonstrates by demanding freedom from imperialist forces. In many ways, the ambiguous nature of Ramona's agency resembles that of Poor Joanna in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. Superficially, Joanna is a weak character who exiles herself to avoid the stigma of abandonment; however, closer analysis reveals that her move to the island actually demonstrates the rejection of social norms, living instead according to her own desires. Both *The Country of the Pointed Firs* and *Ramona* help us see mobile figures as agents of their destinies.

Ramona and Joanna might not demonstrate the extensive psychological depth of Sui Sin Far's characters that I explore later, but they do reveal enough subjectivity to consciously absent themselves from unfortunate situations. The novel initially illustrates Ramona's strength by juxtaposing her with the weak Felipe. While her pseudo-brother cowers under his mother's wishes, Ramona leaves the estate of her “own accord” (173). Although the submissive Felipe grew up with Ramona, even he “did not know the steadfast fibre of the girl's nature” (185). Like many readers, Aunt Ri fails to recognize the:

forces of fortitude [that] had been gathering in Ramona's soul during these last bitter years. Out of her gentle constancy had been woven the heroic fibre of which martyrs are made; this, and her inextinguishable faith, had made her strong, as were those of old, who 'had trial of cruel mocking, wandering about, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, wandered in deserts and in mountains'. (353)

Rather than shrink from forced removals, Ramona becomes a metaphorical Israelite who demonstrates the "heroic fibre" of God's chosen people. This Christian motif of faith and perseverance would have helped the novel's white, Anglo American readers see her as a strong character.

Although Ramona mostly travels with Alessandro, she also travels without his aid. At the Moreno estate, Ramona vows that if Alessandro fails to return, she will join San Juan Bautista's convent to take care of orphan children (193). As she ventures from her childhood home, to the town of San Pasquale, to the Saboba village, to the San Jacinto mountain, and finally to Mexico, Ramona resists the colonization of her surroundings and thus establishes herself as an agent in the face of agency-denying oppressive forces. Each move demonstrates Jackson's larger concern with Native agency and resistance to assimilation.

Prior to Ramona's absence from the Moreno estate, she had little opportunity to demonstrate mobility, since "except for her two years at school with the nuns, she had never been away from the Senora's house" (121). The narrator notes that Ramona had "longed to go to Santa Barbara, or to Monterey, or Los Angeles; but to have asked the Senora's permission to accompany her on some of her now infrequent journeys to these places would have required more courage than Ramona possessed" (121). It is not until the Senora denies the heroine the opportunity to marry Alessandro that the girl gains



enough "courage" to defy this matriarchal force. When Alessandro returns, Ramona "drew a long sigh, and, turning her back on her home, went forward in the path *she had chosen*" (214 emphasis added). Ramona can stay--if she concedes to the Senora's control. However her departure demonstrates the agency to leave a smothering situation.

Although Ramona's departure seems like a personal conflict with the Senora, it actually foreshadows the marginalizing situations Ramona will face as a Native American. Even though her indigenous roots mean that marrying Alessandro will not be miscegenation, the Senora disallows a union that could place the family in a "mortifying and humiliating position" (175). Thus, Ramona begins the series of journeys she endures in response to a colonial system that positions Native peoples at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

After leaving the Moreno estate, Ramona and Alessandro travel to his family's home in San Pasquale. When Anglos start to show interest in their land, the couple leaves San Pasquale for the base of the San Jacinto Mountain. Superficially, this move represents Alessandro's agency more than Ramona's. He wants to leave before the white settlers arrive, but "in her heart of hearts she rebelled against it, as she had never yet rebelled against an act of Alessandro's" (282). Ramona ostensibly goes along with Alessandro against her wishes; yet immediately after her rebellion, the narrator notes that she continues with their departure because she "could not distress him." Ramona chooses not to make things more difficult for Alessandro reflecting, "Was not his burden heavy enough now?" (282). These are not the thoughts of a character that lacks the power to make decisions, but those of someone who has thoroughly considered the ramifications

of her behavior; Ramona *chooses* to go with her husband, knowing that staying will cause his demise.

When the Anglos in the San Jacinto village put their own brands on Native cattle, the couple again realizes that they will become subject to white rule if they do not leave. They decide to further isolate themselves atop the San Jacinto Mountain. Alessandro tells Ramona that they must leave because “there is no help for us, Majella, only to hide; that is all we can do!” (322). He sees them as helpless, while Ramona sees hiding as an act of self-protection and a way to gain a freedom unattainable under Anglo control. Ramona punctuates this liberty with a joyful “at last!...Here we are safe! This is freedom! This is joy!” (323).

Though the heroine's relocation to the mountain ends in Alessandro's tragic death, the choice to remove herself from Anglo society brings temporary “healing to both Alessandro and Ramona” (324). The mountain top becomes a physical barrier that protects Ramona from a world in which Native rights do not exist. As the narrator notes, the mountain “seemed to pierce the sky, looking down upon the world, -- it seemed the whole world, so limitless...feeling that infinite unspeakable sense of nearness to Heaven, remoteness from earth which comes only on mountain heights” (323). Instead of feeling helpless, Ramona's move to the mountain creates a liberating, celestial home. This relocation would have resonated with Jackson's white, Anglo readers who were likely familiar with the biblical significance of the mountaintop as a site where one goes to commune with God. With this symbolism, Ramona's move assumes the support of a divine figure.

Ramona's migrations demonstrate her resistance to the colonial system and also an empowering agency for the larger Native population. This agency challenges the critical tendency to see Jackson's novel as an ineffective agent of social change. Despite the author's desire to "write a story that would do for the Indian a thousandth part of what *Uncle Tom's Cabin* did for the Negro," many critics such as Amy Kaplan and Nina Baym say the text failed to improve the Indian situation (Jackson, *Letters* 258).<sup>iii</sup> At first glance, this assessment seems accurate. The Indians in the text do not originally have a great deal of agency; Senora Moreno suspends the sheep shearing until Father Salvidierra can expose them to Catholicism. Then, when Anglo settlers take over Alessandro's village, the inhabitants cannot resist or they will be shot (199). However, once readers acknowledge how Ramona's mobility defies the interlopers' control, the possibility of a Native agency emerges.

Given Jackson's propensity to use characters as representatives of larger groups (for example, using Aunt Ri to speak for Indian activists), we can read Ramona as a figure of Native agency.<sup>iv</sup> Part of "the path she had chosen" is choosing a Native identity over her provisional Mexican allegiance (214). The narrator notes this newfound desire to live her indigenous identity affirming that, "the sudden knowledge of the fact of her own Indian descent seemed to her like a revelation, pointing out the path in which destiny called her to walk" (186). Instead of accepting her Mexican family, Ramona declares, "Oh, I am glad I am an Indian!" (155).<sup>v</sup> With this declaration, Ramona gains the individual agency to leave an oppressive situation and also asserts a prideful desire to participate in an otherwise marginalized culture. Highlighting Ramona's decision to

identify with her Indian heritage is more than character development; it is a "political act" (Senier, Introduction 28). This act says that if Ramona as a Native person has agency to move, then other indigenous peoples might be able to resist colonial forces as well.

### **A Sovereign Mobility**

When Jackson was writing, "the depressions in 1883, 1885, and 1887 created a climate of anxiety about economic security in which many communities fought against monopolies" for self-determination (Wiebe 52). However, many Americans did not extend this need for self-determination to the Native population. Vine Deloria asserts that U.S. and Native interactions historically revolved around the government's desire to protect its own vested interest in land and settlement, rather than address issues of Native sovereignty (3). Jackson wrote *Ramona* when politicians and Indian rights activists alike fought for the civilization and assimilation of Native peoples but gave little thought to Native self-rule. Christine Holbo asserts that Jackson "had no notion of cultural pluralism...or of cultural rights," squarely positioning the author within this camp of people who ignored Native sovereignty (246). However, I align myself with scholars such as Siobhan Senier who affirm Jackson's interest in Native sovereignty by arguing that the characters' mobility challenges the assimilationist policies of allotment that denied Native peoples self-rule.<sup>vi</sup> Through imagery of the mobile domestic space, the novel depicts characters who take their home on the road to resist forced assimilation. In doing so, they demonstrate the need for a sovereignty that extends beyond legal

documents. The sovereignty that the characters establish is the unique self-determination that comes from negotiating one's location.

Writing about Native self-determination and resistance to assimilation would have been unpopular in an era that saw “civilization” as the humane solution to the conflict over Native land. In 1881, Secretary of the Interior Carl Schurz advocated fitting the Indians “for the habits and occupations of civilized life, by work and by education; to individualize them in the possession and appreciation of property, by allotting to them lands in severalty...that they no longer stand in the way of the development of the country as an obstacle, but form a part of it and are benefited by it” (6). Schurz saw the West's development as inevitable and believed that the government could not stop the influx of Anglo settlers; with the expanding West, Indians faced “civilization or extermination” (6).

While *Ramona* argues against Indian assimilation, extermination was indeed a threat for California's Native populations including the Serranos, the Coahuila, the Don Luisenos, the Dieguinos, the Kumeyaay, the Ipai/Tipai, the Tongva, and the Chumas (Kropp 23) Even though linguistic and political differences kept the tribes mostly separate (Kropp 23), their populations all suffered from the arrival of Europeans and Americans. When Spain initially colonized Alta California in the late 1700s, it set up many missions to regulate the Native population (Kropp 23). Despite Jackson's somewhat romantic portrayal of these missions, they brought diseases and forced labor into the community; after seventy-five years of colonization, the Indian population had dropped to one-third of its pre-contact numbers (Kropp 23). The Mexican government secularized

the missions in the 1830s, freeing Indians from slave labor. However, conditions for the Native Americans did not improve. Many Indians had to become servants for wealthy Californios or return to impoverished Native villages (Kropp 25). In 1845, Southern California's Indian population was estimated at 150,000 and by 1872, had dropped to 5,000 (Mathes 20).

The exact number of Native Americans in Southern California at the turn of the century is difficult to obtain since many (like Ramona and Alessandro) retreated to undeveloped regions away from Anglo rule (Cook 45). These regions were difficult for government agents to access (Cook 61)., The population was also tricky to calculate, since "there was almost universal opposition to being interviewed by anyone with even a remote official association" (Cook 61). Nonetheless, anthropologists and sociologists have some estimates of Southern California's turn-of-the-century Native population. According to the annual report from Mission Agent S. S. Lawson, Southern California's Indian population numbered 2,971 at the turn of the century (Mathes 20). The 1880 census cited the population at 2,756 (Cook 64). Southern California's Native population was rapidly decreasing and many Americans saw "civilization" as the only answer to this problem.

To "civilize" the Indians and create peace in settler regions, many reformers wanted to regulate Native land and turn Indians into yeoman farmers (Mathes 2). During the Peace Commission of 1867, officials met in Fort Laramie, Wyoming and Medicine Lodge Creek, Arkansas to resolve Native-U.S. conflicts in the Plains. These meetings developed the reservation system to separate Native tribes and settlers as well as

encourage Native communities to become more agrarian (Nichols 147; Mathes 2). After the reservations of the Peace Commission, the country's civilizing mission resulted in the passage of the 1887 Dawes Act, which allotted specific territory (160 acres) to each head of an Indian household. The U.S. government held the land in custody for twenty-five years (to avoid its sale) and then granted the land title and citizenship to any Native American who could sustain ownership ("Act"; Senier, Introduction 17).<sup>vii</sup> According to Schurz and other reformers, allotment was the compassionate way to prevent Indian extermination (Gonzalez 439).

Many groups in addition to politicians supported allotment. Miners, farmers, and lumberjacks thought it would open up more space to acquire natural resources and local boosters thought it would help develop provincial areas (Nichols 164). The Women's National Indian Association (WNIA) and the male-dominated Indian Rights Association (IRA) also supported assimilating Native peoples onto individualized lots. These groups felt that allotment would lead to "participation in mainstream American culture," which would ultimately prevent the Natives from being mistreated as marginalized others (Mathes 6-7). The WNIA was so influential in its push for allotment that Henry L. Dawes, author of the General Allotment Act, acknowledged the organization's contribution to the Act (Mathes 14).

Nonetheless, there were a few concerns about the policy. Senator Henry Teller observed that without provisions for population growth, parcels of Native land would grow smaller and smaller, eventually disappearing (Nichols 165).<sup>viii</sup> A few officials observed that the allotted land was not fit for agriculture, making it impossible for the

Native peoples to live up to the agrarian ideal that government officials envisioned (Nichols 167). Even Senator Henry Dawes who sponsored the Allotment Act admitted to having some reservations about its passage (Nichols 167). Finally, many of the Indians themselves did not support this legislation (Washburn 73). In 1879, over one thousand San Luis Rey Mission Indians from the villages of Temecula, La Jolla, Saboba, Pauma, Pala, Pala, Potrero, Rincon, and San Luis Rey signed a petition requesting that the government permit them to stay on their tribal lands, but Congress refused to respond to this request (Mathes 43).

By removing tribes from their communal lands and forcing them into individualized plots, the government issued a "blow" to Native peoples that "was less economic than psychological or even spiritual" (Washburn 75).<sup>ix</sup> As Wilcomb Washburn asserts, with the Act's passage, "a way of life had been smashed [and] a value system destroyed" (75). The Act harmed Native peoples by imposing upon them an agrarian way of life that denied "the possibility of adapting to modern American life" (Georgi-Findlay 245).

Additionally, the Dawes Act demanded that to be "civilized," an Indian had to live "separate and apart from any tribe of Indians" ("Act" Sec. 6). This normative social order based on isolated individualism ultimately made it easier for the government to displace indigenous peoples who did not operate under such frameworks (Rifkin 343); it also perpetuated the problematic idea that only property owners deserved government protection (Senier, *Voices* 5).<sup>x</sup> But above all else, the Dawes Act damaged tribes' social systems by forcing them to privilege individual property ownership over communal



ownership (Mathes 4). Allotment limited Native people's sovereignty by fixing them in isolated locations that ultimately compromised their communal identities.<sup>xi</sup> In short, separating Native peoples from their traditional communities and lands was "culturally and genocidally destructive to Indian peoples as peoples" (Tinker 163). I read mobility in *Ramona* as a sign of the characters' resistance to the rhetoric of allotment as well as a call for Native sovereignty in which indigenous peoples maintain their right for communal self-definition.

Rather than overtly call for Native sovereignty, the novel relies on the metaphor of Ramona's domestic independence to argue for Native people's independence from a larger assimilating political system. Granted, Jackson likely would not have issued a direct call for Native sovereignty, given the general distrust of indigenous self-governance at that time. She published her novel just thirteen years after the passage of the 1871 Indian Appropriation Act, which Jackson details in her *A Century of Dishonor* (27). This Act meant that Congress would no longer acknowledge Native American tribes as sovereign nations, nor recognize any treaties made with them. In 1898, the United States government passed the Curtis Act, which abolished tribal courts and made Indian law unenforceable, further restricting Native nations' right to self-rule (Washburn 76). Ultimately, reformers and politicians alike saw self-determination as a threat to their civilizing mission. Henry S. Pancoast, the organizer of the Indian Rights Association, argued in the same year of *Ramona's* publication that "just so long as these Indians are alienated by their political independence, so long will they be comparatively impervious to the refining and elevating influence of civilization" (14-15). Nonetheless, even though

*Ramona* does not explicitly call for Native sovereignty in the legal sense, the text presents mobile characters who offer self-determination as a possible answer to the conflict between Indians and Americans.

Siobhan Senior argues that *Ramona* demands Native political independence by forcing the U.S. to recognize treaties it made with these once-sovereign nations (Introduction 16). However, the call to recognize former treaties makes Native sovereignty a thing of the past, alive only in document form. I argue that *Ramona* demonstrates that mobility is a more sustainable form of sovereignty not regulated by historical documents. Rather than constitute Native self-determination as the ability to make political agreements with other nations, or recognition by other governments, *Ramona* depicts a sovereignty that Craig Womack describes as “inherent rather than derivative” (362). In other words, *Ramona*’s representation of indigenous self-determination “is not granted by courts; in fact, it preexists them” (Womack 362). In many ways, *Ramona* and Alessandro’s claiming of a sovereignty apart from existing political systems speaks to a more Native-centric definition of self-determination. Vine Deloria and Clifford M. Lytle say that many tribes do not rely on overt political institutions to order society because they understand “their place in the universe as one given specifically to them” (9). There is the concept of cultural unity and nationhood within tribes, but little need for the political “complexity” of European societies (Deloria and Lytle 9).

Unfortunately, *Ramona* and Alessandro’s form of self-determination requires them to leave their land, an element integral to the “psychological makeup” of many

Native peoples (Deloria and Lytle 12). Connection to land is also important for the social organization and value system of many tribes (Tinker 164, Deloria 75). I recognize that the sovereignty they claim is not the ideal nationhood that allows Native peoples to occupy tribal land free of U.S. interference (Deloria and Lytle 13), but even less-than-ideal forms of resistance deserve credit; Ramona and Alessandro might suffer under the oppressive system, yet they also reclaim agency by challenging the assimilationist policies of a government that disavows their humanity. Even though the time period forbids Jackson from making a direct call for large-scale Native sovereignty, the couple's individualism still draws attention to other moments of Native sovereignty. Their individual resistance to assimilation mirrors that of Alessandro's tribe which also organizes outside of U.S. governance. Twice in the novel, tribal leaders discourage violence, and twice, the Indians obey. When Temecula is invaded, the tribal community looks to Alessandro for guidance. Without any help from government agencies, the tribe enacts a community-wide migration (202).

*Ramona's* characters not only refuse acculturation into American society, but all forms of forced assimilation in general. Although Sra. Moreno resists assimilation to Anglo society, she has no problem indoctrinating her indigenous workers with her religious beliefs; she concludes that without Spanish missionaries to "teach and civilize them," the Indians would be "naked savages" (188). She is the first character who pushes her cultural superiority onto the Indian characters. However, Ramona and Alessandro reject this acculturation when they leave Sra. Moreno's civilizing desires for a secret canyon free from civilization. Within this Edenic space, the couple finds a peace that an

imperialist society cannot offer. *Ramona* presents the natural world as a foil to an imperializing civilization when the narrator remarks that “Nothing is stronger proof of the original intent of Nature to do more for man than the civilization... than the quick and sure way in which she reclaims his affection, when by weariness, idle chance, or disaster, he is returned, for an interval, to her arms” (229). Juxtaposed with nature's spiritual renewal, the civilized Anglo world means death for Alessandro and Ramona.

Alessandro often serves as a model for Ramona's resistance to assimilation. Knowing that the white world will limit his freedom, Alessandro frequently avoids "civilized" white spaces. When the Anglo settler takes his land in San Pasquale, Alessandro chooses to leave rather than live as a subservient farm worker. He also refuses to work as a violinist for affluent whites in Los Angeles (294). Alessandro explains this decision to Ramona: "what does Majella think would become of one Indian, or two, alone among the whites? If they will come to our villages and drive us out a hundred at a time, what would they do to one man alone?" (294). By averting white society, Alessandro not only rejects assimilation, but also preserves his membership within the larger tribal community.

From the beginning, the novel privileges a communal way of life to one based on American individualism. When Felipe tells Ramona that no one in Alessandro's community is considered "poor," because they share resources, Ramona concludes that this is a more "generous" way to live (109). When the characters leave colonized spaces, they move towards communities in San Pasquale and at the base of the San Jacinto Mountain, rather than sites of isolation. Alessandro and Ramona isolate themselves on

top of the San Jacinto Mountain only when they run out of other options. Still, this seclusion does not come without emotional consequences. Although this move challenges the Anglo-centric civilizing mission, it also brings "the bitterness of exile [and] the anguish of friendlessness" (69). Community is so important for Alessandro that he fears punishment from the saints "for having resolved to leave my people" (199). Thus, the novel presents communal living as a lifestyle that destabilizes a national agenda to individualize Native peoples.

By leaving, Ramona and Alessandro ostensibly become products of a political system that dissolved Native communities, supporting the Dawes Act's agenda. However, their individualism resulting from a proactive mobility ultimately becomes a form of resistance. Ramona and Alessandro are homeless, but their chosen exile reveals an agency that thwarts the colonial desire to fix Native peoples within stratified, separate spaces. This fixity, embodied by the white ranchers who fence off their land, does not permit the free-range stocks so important to Alessandro's tribe (318). Alessandro rejects this containment, telling the Anglo settler that he "pulled up and burned" the ranchers' boundary stakes (280). This destruction of individual spaces calls for a more mobile existence that permits communal ownership.

Aside from physically moving themselves, Alessandro and Ramona also create mobile domestic spaces that prevent an imperialist desire to fix Native peoples in regulated locations. With each move, Ramona recreates her domestic space, revealing a flexibility that belies the spatial fixity of the Anglo community. Ramona's adaptability becomes evident the first time she leaves the Moreno estate for Alessandro's secret

canyon. She adjusts so quickly that the canyon becomes "like a friendly home" (299). Later in San Pasquale, Ramona rearranges their new home into a "palace" (267). When the couple settles in Saboba, Aunt Ri vows that Ramona's fixed the place "jest like a parlor!" (303).

On the surface, Ramona's inclination for domesticity replicates an imperialist agenda that wanted "individual Indian families safely maintained in their individual homes" (Senier, *Voices* 41).<sup>xiii</sup> However, Ramona's unique brand of homemaking reworks an imperialist domesticity rather than reproduces it. Mixed with colonial images such as Ramona's Madonna statuette, we find a natural world of wild-cucumber plants, the Manzanita cradle, and deer skin rugs that co-exist with the images of "civilization." While the novel most likely emphasized Ramona's domestic prowess to garner the sympathy of Jackson's white, middle-class, female readership, I assert that Ramona's resourceful use of natural décor shows independence from the colonizing Anglo domesticity. Instead, she decides when, how, and where she wants to move her family, demonstrating a desire for sovereignty and the ability to manage her small social network apart from Anglo individualism.

On route to San Pasquale, Ramona and Alessandro go by a battleground from the Mexican War where many American soldiers died. This site reminds Alessandro that he is not tied to the U.S. government and he even offers to fight the Americans should another war arise (256). When the government doctor for Indians will not travel to the couple's dying daughter, Alessandro and Ramona further realize that they cannot survive under U.S. law. This disregard for Native rights solidifies Alessandro's belief that the

American government is just a “synonym for fraud and cruelty” (257). After this event, Ramona and Alessandro become self-governing, moving to the San Jacinto mountaintop where they can exist independent of U.S. law. This final move represents the culmination of the couple's resistance to assimilation, spatial fixity, and an unjust colonial government; it signifies Ramona and Alessandro's right to decide their fate without consulting a government that has labeled them as expendable.

### **Sentimentalized Mobility**

Through their movement, *Ramona's* characters avoid settling in allotted, Anglo-civilized spaces that diminish Native communal identities and political agency. Yet any satisfaction we take in their mobile agency is complicated with the emotional aftermath of homelessness that settles “like an unbearable burden” on Alessandro and Ramona (231). Thus, we feel conflicting emotions – rejoicing in the characters' agency, but lamenting the suffering of self-imposed exile. Jewett's novel invites readers to consider the sentimental aspects of mobility as it bonds friends and family. However, Jackson's novel creates empathy for characters whose mobility stems from the *disruption* of community. In *Ramona*, movement becomes more a tool of social reform than an affirmation of existing ways of life.

While some critics disapprove of the novel's sentimentalism, we should not dismiss Jackson's pathos so easily, lest we miss how sentimental mobility aids the novel's social critique.<sup>xiii</sup> First, Ramona's moral fortitude helps readers lament her dispossession as a figure who cannot find a home for her offspring. Furthermore, the synthesis of

mobility and emotion redeems the text from the charge of reductive romance that ends with the quintessential marriage. Ramona's relocation to Mexico does more than tie up loose ends or perpetuate the trope of the Vanishing Native; her move is the ultimate critique of colonial injustice.

Jackson uses sentiment strategically as a "political act par excellence" (Castronovo 18). She justifies her sentimental treatment of California's landscape in a letter to Thomas Bailey Aldrich, writing, "what I wanted to do, was to draw a picture so winning and alluring in the beginning of the story, that the reader would become thoroughly interested in the characters ... and would have swallowed a big dose of information of the Indian Question, without knowing it" (*Letters* 337). Jackson knew that she had appeal to people's emotions to make a palatable call for reform.<sup>xiv</sup>

Even though Jackson draws her reader in with an "alluring" romance, her storytelling does not lose sight of real-life injustices. On the contrary, many of the novel's most emotional events stem from incidents Jackson witnessed during her time as Special Commissioner to the Southern Californian Mission Indians. With Abbot Kinney as her co-commissioner, Jackson visited various Indian villages and interviewed Indians, fellow agents, and missionaries to gather information for *Ramona* (Strickland 121). Her travels revealed the story of a Cahuilla Indian who was killed for stealing a white farmer's horse; this narrative later became the foundation for Alessandro's death and is outlined in "Exhibit C" of her 1883 *Report on the Condition and Needs of the Mission Indians of California*. Jackson's travels also introduced her to a San Diego priest who later became Father Gaspara (Dorris xi). Thus, while Ramona's plight as a dispossessed Native might



seem overly sentimental, her fictional mobility evolved from Jackson's real-life journeys. While not collapsing author with character, we also cannot divorce the emotion of Ramona's self-imposed exile from the reality of Jackson's experiences with homeless Natives.<sup>xv</sup>

Rather than a tired romantic trope, the couple's move to Mexico becomes a politically significant act that critiques a country that denies Native peoples domestic security. With the brief, albeit significant reference to the friend of Alessandro's father who "had returned to Mexico in disgust with the state of affairs in California" (85), the novel foreshadows Ramona's self-exile. While this friend of Alessandro's father never develops further, his character reveals the option for immigration when the U.S. proves unsatisfactory. When Felipe suggests relocating to Mexico, Ramona does not respond like the overly emotional, love-sick heroine; She agrees with the pragmatic rationale of a mother who "would spare her daughter the burden she had gladly, heroically borne herself, in the bond of race" (369).

Furthermore, the couple does not live "happily-ever-after" as the romantic masterplot demands (Dorris xii). Ramona and Felipe do not leave for Mexico to live in wedded bliss, but rather because of the social inequalities that make the U.S. uninhabitable for marginalized populations. Although Ramona experiences belonging in Mexico, she has to leave the familiar Moreno estate and all its beloved workers. Furthermore, there is always a sense of unrest in Ramona's marriage to Felipe. She is emotionally absent because "the mainsprings of Ramona's life were no longer of this earth; ...she walked in constant fellowship with one unseen," mourning Alessandro's

absence (418). Felipe knows that Ramona's calm references to Alessandro do "not mean a lessening grief," but rather "an unchanged relation" (366). Thus, Ramona's marriage to Felipe does not eradicate the pain of Alessandro's murder; now she is simply in a new location in which this grief (and a new identity that stems from this grief) can evolve apart from a world of assimilation and allotment.

While some contemporary critics critique Jackson for reducing colonialism to a situation resolvable through marriage, others lament the ending's ostensible perpetuation of the "disappearing Indian" trope, calling it a "Cooperesque celebration of 'vanishing Americans'" (Holbo 243). They argue that the ending affirms Indian extinction (King 12; DeLyser 29). Others such as Siobhan Senier, Gregg Crane, and Rosemary King disagree that the ending promotes the disappearance of Native people. Instead, they assert that Ramona's marriage to Felipe generates social commentary by affirming the heroine's right to marry into the dominant class and create a hybridized race (*Voices* 17; 44; 15). John Gonzalez supports them, saying that Ramona's departure to Mexico critiques the U.S.'s inability to accept multiracial figures (454). Nevertheless, saying that Ramona's self-exile represents the right to a multiethnic identity might be too simplistic. Instead, her absence speaks to the larger issue of Native self-determination. Her move to Mexico denotes the rejection of a country that will not allow her a cultural identity, a space to raise a family, a connection to the land, and ethnic roots.

Ramona and Felipe's absence also means that the United States loses this refined, domestic couple, an ideal that Indian reformers tried to encourage. The novel's depictions of Ramona and Alessandro highlight their "forbearance and dignity" when oppressive

forces deny them a home (Padget 847). Contrasting with Farrar, the white settler who wrathfully murders Alessandro, Ramona and her husband remain the morally superior figures who persevere for the good of their family. Later, the Mexican locals recognize Ramona's "gentle dignity of demeanor by which she was distinguished in all assemblages," in short, a demeanor that is too gentle for a country where violent rage prevails over reason (424). While Ramona's final move highlights her moral superiority (and thus enhances our empathy for someone who did not deserve such tragedies), it simultaneously emphasizes the immorality of a racist system that refuses to reward such goodness.

At the same time that we feel sadness for the heroine's departure, we also root for this maternal figure who sacrifices her home to raise her daughter in a better world. Thus, Jackson's use of sentiment positions Ramona as the mobile mother, rather than the archetypal, sentimental bride who resolves life's conflicts through marriage. Essentially, Jackson's politicized sentiment justifies the novel's reliance on various local spaces. We feel for the Native characters as they continually have to rebuild their homes in different regions; we also understand their quest for residential areas free from oppressive settler communities.<sup>xvi</sup> Through the characters' movements, the novel shows that regionalist texts can portray characters as unfixed -- not forced into controlled spaces. When the characters resist geographic situatedness, they also destabilize the cultural fixity of spatial boundaries; through this destabilization, Jackson's novel shows how regionalist works do not always privilege a nostalgic mindset that preserves cultural authenticity over dynamic identities.

## The Challenge to Critical Assumptions about Regionalism

As with Jackson's use of the sentimental marriage plot, critics fault her attention to Southern California as a marketing ploy (both for her novel and for regional boosterism) that ultimately detracts from her political agenda (Holbo 244; DeLyser 17). Bryan Wagner even calls Jackson's local color "errant," saying that she "abandons the liberal fiction of equal rights" for a "pastoral" novel written for "noblesse oblige" (4). While the novel might have persuaded some of these privileged readers to care about the theft of Native land, "it inspired many more to purchase packaged tours of Southern California" (Wagner 5). This accusation is problematic given *Ramona's* unstinting critique of the whites' treatment of Native peoples. Contrary to critics who see the novel's regionalism as a flaw, I argue that the regional spaces provide the ground for characters to resist assimilation and advocate Native sovereignty. The novel's representation of regional spaces not only calls for a new stance on the Indian problem, but also reconsideration of the genre's perceived tendency to privilege cultural authenticity and temporal fossilization.

Similar to the characters in Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, the characters' mobility in *Ramona* troubles critical assertions about regionalism's frequent obsession with fixity. The narrator's mobility in Jewett's novel shows that Dunnet Landing is not as demographically homogenous or as geographically bounded as critics assume. Through mobility, Jackson's characters similarly challenge critical assertions of fixity in regionalism by not adhering to set locations, monolithic cultural essences, or the past.<sup>xvii</sup> Rather than replicate critical assumptions about the genre's representation of

fixed boundaries, authentic identities, and pre-modern nostalgia, *Ramona* anticipates contemporary Native studies that utilize regional spaces as a metaphor for indigenous communities. The novel's use of mobile characters also foreshadows current regionalist scholarship by contemporary critics such as Phillip Joseph and Tom Lutz who see regions as fluid spaces that privilege cultural ambiguity over authenticity. Jackson's representation of regions as sites of cultural creation rather than permanence allows *Ramona* to develop a nuanced identity that spans cultures and temporal moments. The novel's depiction of a regionalism amenable to contemporary scholarly approaches means destabilizing the divide between nineteenth-century regionalist texts and current discourses on local spaces. In the conclusion, I further address the relevance of Jackson's novel to current discourses on spatial belonging. However, before we can understand *Ramona's* connection to contemporary regionalist scholarship, we must first recognize the novel's reconstitution of late nineteenth-century regionalism.

First, the novel's representations of mobility problematize assertions about the genre's use of location to critique oppressive social situations. Linking location with regionalism's interest in social issues, Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse note that the genre typically offers marginalized characters a sense of "locatedness" from which they can "critique received meanings and construct new ones" (*Writing Out of Place* 37). They conclude that regionalism enables marginalized characters to find communities, cultures, and spaces in which they can belong, affirming their social worth. However, it is dangerous to say that one *has* to belong to a specific region to claim an identity, especially for *Ramona's* Native American characters who cannot claim a territory for

political reasons. Allotment policies for Native Americans show that forcing spatial fixity space for cultural recognition is equally damaging. As Eudora Welty notes, "place...has the most delicate control over character...by confining character, it defines it" (122). Place is a positive identifier for cultures (as I argue in the subsequent chapter on Sui Sin Far), but "confining" characters to specific locations risks replicating oppressive systems of control.

Instead of depicting regions as entities that fix characters in space, *Ramona's* representations of mobility show that the genre also uses dislocation to comment on social injustices. The first example of dislocation as a liberatory force occurs when Ramona must decide about her future with Alessandro. Initially, Jackson delves into the details of the Moreno estate, offering "lengthy descriptions of the floor plan and layout" to render the authentic Mexican hacienda of colonial California (King 7). However, this space becomes a site of dislocation when Ramona's choice of spouse leaves her essentially homeless. Instead of perpetuating the sentimental lure of the Spanish missionaries and picturesque Mexican haciendas, this micro-region perpetuates racial hierarchies. Rather than offer Ramona a sense of belonging, the estate becomes the backdrop for a devastating encounter with the racist Sra. Moreno. By opting for dislocation over spatial association, Ramona's absence critiques an intolerant system that privileges Mexican elitism over her mixed-race Indian heritage. The heroine's homelessness shows that regionalism does not have to perpetuate a sense of "locatedness" as Fetterley and Pryse claim, to critique unjust systems; some of the most poignant and moving critiques come from the absence of regional belonging.

Another scene of dislocation occurs when the white settlers occupy Temecula, causing Alessandro to "have no home"(198). Under traditional readings, Alessandro's village would give him a place from which he could resist the occupation. However, his homelessness incites as much protest as located critique. After returning to his village, Alessandro hides outside his former home to observe the white interlopers dining in his house. He tells Ramona, "I thought I should go mad, Majella. If I had had my gun, I should have shot them all dead" (244). Ramona responds with, "they have made you homeless in your home" (147). This moment of dislocation illustrates the cruelty of an unjust system that permits interlopers to thrive in a stolen home.

Moreover, dislocation in *Ramona* shows that regional characters do not have to depend on associations with space for their sense of worth or cultural identity. With a flexible Native American identity that develops because of (not despite) her mobility, Ramona reveals that "culture cannot be confined to a single, coherent, isolated area" (King xiv). Dislocation can produce a cultural identity just as much as location, meaning that regions can and should be more than badges of Native identity or a measure of authenticity. In depicting characters who do not depend on regional affiliation to validate their cultural identities, Jackson's novel problematizes assumptions about how local color texts preserve cultures within spatial boundaries and temporal moments.

*Ramona*'s challenge to a regionalized cultural authenticity defies critics who see local color texts as obsessed with "authentic regional detail, including *authentic* dialect, *authentic* local characters, real geographical settings, *authentic* local customs, and dress" (Donovan, *SOJ* 7, emphasis added). The genre gained this reputation for privileging

authenticity because late nineteenth-century readers believed that the local was genuine compared to the world of "the modern, the manufactured, the commercial, the urban, and increasingly, the foreign" (Zagarell, "Troubling" 643). Readers expected regionalist works to produce "some semblance of order preserved in ritual" (Campbell, *Resisting* 14); in short, regionalism preserved their threatened way of life in print (Brodhead 115). Aside from archiving "traditional" small town America, the genre also gained the paradoxical reputation of distilling "the exotic essences of the nation's cultural margins" (Karem 1). Regionalism provided order on the one hand and excitement about the foreign on the other, as urban readers consumed depictions of those living outside of the normative urban sphere.

Jackson would have recognized this literary trend in which writers attempted to render local inhabitants authentically. She also wrote during an age that was increasingly attentive to cultural authenticity, especially within so-called folk cultures. The American Folklore Society (an organization that "stressed authenticity as a key value") was founded in 1888, only four years after *Ramona's* publication (Barrish 78). During this time, anthropology, a field to study real cultures, gained recognition as an academic discourse. Jackson's career as a Special Commissioner for the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs also demanded that she record the lives of the Southern Californian Mission Indians as realistically as possible. During her travels to Southern California, she documented the lives of the Mission Indians for her fifty-six page government report. Her appeal to the U.S. government for legal reform depended on her accurate depiction of the Natives' deplorable living conditions.



While Jackson might have strived for authenticity, her characters movements actually destabilize the idea of an essentialized cultural identity. Through Ramona's travels, her identity changes, disproving the existence of an authentic Native identity and the assertion that such an identity depends on a single space. Once we read Ramona's cultural identity as more of a performative act of mobility rather than something to authenticate, we can see the inherent falseness of using local color texts to affirm a distinct cultural essence.

Ramona's identity begins to change with her first major move. Initially, with her Mexican upbringing and religious instruction, she is "a fully assimilated Spanish *senorita*" (Venegas 76). Later, when Ramona gathers her possessions to leave the Moreno estate with Alessandro, he does not recognize her as woman raised in a Mexican hacienda. The moment he sees her carrying a bundle in the same manner as women of his community, he mistakes her "for an Indian woman toiling along under a heavy load" (215). Significantly, Ramona remains a California until she *chooses* to identify as an Indian, challenging the notion of an inescapable biological authenticity (Luis-Brown 827).

Later, when Ramona travels to Saboba, she seems even more integrated into the Native community when she quickly gains the community elder's acceptance. When Alessandro translates Ramona's words to the village elder into the San Luiseno language, he thinks, "It must be the Virgin herself that is teaching Majella what to say" (263). A cultural crossing occurs when Ramona relies on the Virgin, a religious figure of her Mexican childhood, to ingratiate herself with Alessandro's tribe. Ramona's physical

dislocation has not rendered her culturally homeless, but rather flexible enough to move within multiple social groups. Even more importantly, her multicultural identity refutes the idea that there is something inherently Native she must locate to join Alessandro's tribe. Instead, *Ramona* privileges cultural fluidity, defying critics who emphasize regionalism's interest in authenticity.

Alessandro's ethnically complex character also challenges the possibility of an authentic Native identity. From the novel's beginning, "Alessandro, the hero, was not portrayed as a typical Indian, at least not what the public perceived as the stereotype" (Mathes 84). He is Christian, valued as a community leader, and "has a soft, Southern, Spanish nature, whose darkest element is a passionate melancholy" (Goodale N. pag.). Valerie Mathes argues that the novel's depiction of Alessandro as an elite Mexican negates his "Indianism" (84). However, his flexible identity makes an authentic "Indianism" problematic. By hybridizing Alessandro's ethnicity, *Ramona* declines to satisfy readers' desire for depictions of the quintessential Indian. Instead, Alessandro is an Indian who can be Spanish and white, Christian and distrusting of religious hegemony, civilized and resistant to the civilizing mission.

When describing Alessandro's attraction to Ramona, the narrator reveals the hero's multifaceted identity. First, the narrator observes that Alessandro "was not a civilized man; he had to bring to bear on his present situation only simple, primitive, uneducated instincts and impulses" (86). Yet the following paragraph notes how he chastely worships Ramona from afar during the church service because he is "ever so civilized" (86). His character, which spans cultures and geographic spaces, shows that not

all regionalist texts fix entities in set locations and identities. This resistance to cultural authenticity will resurface in greater detail in the subsequent chapters on Sarah Barnwell Elliott's *The Durket Sperret* and Sui Sin Far's *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*. In these chapters I show how these texts problematize what it means to be an authentic Appalachian and an authentic Chinese descendant, respectively. However, as a predecessor, Jackson's novel begins destabilizing assumptions about regionalism's focus on authenticity.

In addition to defying myths about the genre's obsession with cultural essence, *Ramona's* mobile characters also undermine regionalism's supposed nostalgia. Even though Jackson writes about a specific historical moment in which the U.S. government disregarded Native land rights, her novel does not fix its characters in this time period. This refusal to privilege the past refutes the idea that regionalism is an "exercise in nostalgia" or "a retreat from modern urban society to a timeless rural origin" (Wood 13; Kaplan, "Nation, Region, and Empire" 256). Fred Davis asserts that nostalgia equals "The Beautiful Past and the Unattractive Present"—sentimental feelings for the past based on dissatisfaction with the present (18). For individuals dissatisfied with "the onslaught of modernization," regionalism supposedly provides a "return to the pastoral moment" (Crane 171).

Some critics argue that *Ramona*, like other regionalist texts, privileges the past. Bryan Wagner asserts that the novel's picturesque depictions of Spanish colonial missions imply that "the American Indians...were better off" under colonial rule (3). Yolanda Venegas affirms the work's supposed yearning for colonial missions, saying that *Ramona* "silences the devastation of Native communities during the mission period by presenting

a romanticized version of colonization in which benevolent Franciscan friars brought enlightenment to welcoming Natives” (72). While the text does create an aesthetically pleasing picture of mission life, it ultimately problematizes pining for the past.

Rather than uphold all missionary priests as civilizing agents of Native communities, Jackson notes their corruption when Alessandro tells Ramona about priests who stole from the poor; he declares that “they are not all good, -- not like Father Salvierderra” (248). Still unconvinced, Ramona wishes for a time when “the men like Father Salvierderra had all the country. Then there would be work for all...and the Missions were like palaces, and ...there were thousands of Indians in every one of them; thousands and thousands, all working so happy and peaceful” (248). Alessandro corrects Ramona's nostalgia: “The Senora does not know all that happened at the Missions...some of them were dreadful things, when bad men had power” (248). Furthermore, while Senora Moreno represents the Spanish missions with her reverence for Father Salvierderra and her reliance on Native peonage, Jackson cautions readers not to empathize with this cruel character. The narrator even tells *Ramona's* readers that of the two female protagonists, “Ramona was, to the world at large, far more important than the Senora herself. The Senora was of the past; Ramona was of the present” (58). While the Senora passes away without recognition, Ramona survives in “the world at large” (58). Ramona could mourn her guardian's death, but instead she starts over in Mexico. Her mobility shows that “sentiment, however sacred and loving towards the dead, must yield to the demands of the living” (252).

The novel avoids a return to the past and also rejects a more historical conceptualization of nostalgia--the feeling of homesickness. In the late seventeenth century, the word "nostalgia" first appeared as a term that the Swiss physician Johannes Hofer used to describe the Swiss mercenaries' experiences of homesickness (Wilson 21). In an agrarian age in which people settled in a single small town, nostalgia was longing for home. However, the movement of a modern society "has begun to dislodge man's deep psychological attachment to a specific house, in a specific locality, in a specific region" (F. Davis 29). By refusing not just the past, but an antiquated definition of nostalgia, Ramona and Alessandro insert themselves into a present modernity. They yearn for neither a previous home nor an earlier time period because this return home is simply impossible. Except for when Ramona briefly revisits the Moreno estate, the characters constantly relocate, moving themselves farther and farther away from their original homesteads. When leaving Saboba, Alessandro tells Ramona, "Do not look back, Majella! Do not look back! It is gone!" (283). Ramona is superior in strength to Lot's wife who turns to a pillar of salt after looking homeward (a reference Jackson's readers would have recognized). Rather than focus on the past, the characters use their mobility to begin new lives, free of Anglo rule.

Ramona and Alessandro could focus on their losses, but they choose to cope with Anglo settlement by moving. Instead of privileging a linear temporality that laments an irrecoverable past, the characters' order their lives through spatial negotiations. By resisting nostalgia, *Ramona* troubles assumptions about regionalism's penchant for a lost way of life and also presents an alternative worldview in which place trumps temporality.

This interest in space over linear temporality suits a novel that offers interpretations of Native culture because, as George Tinker notes, many indigenous societies revolve around spatial rather than temporal relationships (163). While Western European societies measure their lives with a "seven-day cycle requiring the repetition of a ceremonial event," Indian ceremonies depend on the physical locations of natural objects such as the sun and the moon (Tinker 163). *Ramona's* resistance to nostalgia and a Western temporality show that some regionalist texts might have more in common with a Native worldview than critics have initially perceived. Jackson's text draws attention to the injustices Native people suffered at the hands of a colonial system, but it also exposes readers to Native beliefs and values.

Earlier I argued that *Ramona's* regions provide space through which the characters move to challenge U.S.'s settlement policies. However the spaces are not just settings; much like tribal-specific governments, regions also trouble a centralized, national identity, at least in theory. In reality, we know that regions often do the work of a larger nationstate, such as California's backing of Anglo interlopers who took Native land with impunity. However, as metaphorical subsets of a national order, regions enable an individualism that figures tribes who want to maintain unique tribal identities while unifying as a Native network. As an alternative to nation-state governance, regions allow for "*interzones* where different constituencies collide and, as a result, renegotiate their communal frames" (Foster 272 original emphasis). Furthermore, Native scholar Tol Foster asserts that regions are a useful metaphor for tribal identities because both indigenous communities and regions suffer from exoticization and romanticization as

entities on the fringe of dominant systems. *Ramona* anticipates the metaphorical connection between regions and tribal identities.<sup>xviii</sup> In its destabilization of cultural authenticity and temporal fixity, the novel was also ahead of its time in predicting issues relevant to twenty-first century regionalist discourses.

As early as the late nineteenth century, Jackson's novel foresaw contemporary regionalist scholarship's call to "move beyond naturalized conceptions of spatialized 'cultures' and to explore instead the production of difference within common, shared, and connected spaces" (Gupta and Ferguson 16). In today's global age where "people are chronically mobile and routinely displaced, and invent homes and homelands in the absence of territorial, national bases" (Malkki 24), we need a regionalism that does not perpetuate a geographic and cultural fixity incompatible with a mobile population. Jackson's novel foreshadows this need, destabilizing the region as a site of permanence; in doing so, *Ramona* shows how marginalized peoples use mobility to re-appropriate dislocation in empowering ways and also how regional cultures do not need physical locations to validate their existence.

When the novel's mobile characters refute the notion that cultures must operate within established geographic spaces, *Ramona* enables the possibility of trans-spatial cultures. The Cuban poet, José Martí, hints at this possibility when he views Ramona's mestizaje identity as a symbol of future post-national cosmopolitanism. In his 1897 Spanish translation of *Ramona*, Martí wrote, "Helen Hunt Jackson ... ha escrito quizás en *Ramona* nuestra novela [In *Ramona*, Helen Hunt Jackson perhaps has written our novel]" (qtd. in Irwin 539). Martí saw Ramona's blending of different cultures as an example of a

multi-hemispheric post-nationalism that he envisioned for Cuba (Irwin 539). *Ramona's* cultural multiplicity enabled by her physical mobility, allowed the novel's regionalism to reach as far as Cuba. Thus, the potential arises for regionalist writing to become post-regional or to perpetuate cultural values that speak to others outside of the original geopolitical space. My conclusion expands on the idea of regions as global spaces, but for now, it is important to note that *Ramona's* mobile characters foreshadow today's migratory populace and hint at regionalist discourse that facilitates rather than impedes cultural multiplicity.

Ultimately, *Ramona* illustrates that regional spaces (and the literature that depicts these spaces) can be productive forces of social resistance *if* readers do not view them as enforcers of geographic, cultural, and temporal "locatedness." If we tie culture to specific spaces, politically homeless individuals like *Ramona* have no access to culture. Furthermore, limiting *Ramona* to a specific regional space means that we miss her cultural adaptability and her power to navigate multiple locations. Ultimately, Jackson's text warns us that fixing people into assigned spatialized identities restricts their potential to develop multifaceted cultural identities. These pluralized identities undermine critical views about regionalism's authentication of cultures on the brink of extinction.

### **Looking Backward**

*Ramona* not only speaks to contemporary studies of regionalism that situate local spaces within a global community, but its resistance to temporal and cultural fixity also helps readers interpret Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. First,



Jackson's novel shows how a text such as Jewett's novel might uphold Native values by not privileging a Western temporality of teleological progression. Secondly, when clear Western delineations of past, present, and future disappear in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* as they do in *Ramona*, we see a town that is not on the edge of extinction, but rather a lively community of mobile residents. Finally, Jackson's work reminds us how mobility can be a form of resistance to oppressive situations, allowing readers to interpret moments of self-imposed mobility such as Joanna's removal as liberatory rather than reductive.

While *The Country of the Pointed Firs* does not address the mistreatment of Native peoples as overtly as *Ramona*, the novel does show interest in a more Native-centric worldview through its anti-linear progression. As Elizabeth Ammons argues, *The Country of the Pointed Firs's* narrative arrangement is not chronological, but circular. These circles develop when characters move towards and away from communal sites ("Going in Circles" 85). Their recursive mobility creates a circular temporality similar to that proffered in Native oral literatures (Murphy 669). By challenging a linear time that relegates the Native to the past, the novel's structure enables indigenous peoples to become part of the non-linear present (Murphy 669). This non-chronological development also parallels *Ramona's* rejection of a cultural nostalgia that wants to locate certain cultures (regional or Native) within the past.

In a similar manner, Dunnet Landing's current residents are not inhabitants of the past, but alive in the present. Critics have long debated whether or not Jewett's novel represents a vanishing culture or a vibrant community. Josephine Donovan argues for the

former, saying that the novel is "elegiac. The preindustrial, matriarchal community of Dunnet Landing is dying" (Donovan, *SOJ* 100). Other critics such as Warner Berthoff are not so pessimistic, arguing that even though "the disappearance of the town into the landscape confirms its creeping decay...the beauty and vitality of the setting assert...a superior fortune" (146). Berthoff reads the community's beautiful surroundings as a sign of prosperity and perpetuity. If the community can thrive like Maine's natural world, all will continue as expected. However, I argue that the mobility of Jewett's characters is a better indicator of the energy necessary for sustaining community life. The previous chapter asserts that mobility strengthens Dunnet Landing's social network, but Jackson's novel shows how mobility in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* might also allow the coastal culture to thrive in a world that wants to relegate it to the past.

Even though Dunnet Landing has some characters such as Elijah Tilley who cannot leave the past, references to mobility subtly keep the community from fossilization. Take Captain Littlepage's concern for bicycles. They offend him because they do not promote world travel as ships used to (21). While Littlepage fears that bicycles will make the community more insular and less cosmopolitan, his anxieties are unfounded. Significantly, with the exception of Littlepage, this allegedly cloistered community has embraced the bicycle craze of the 1890's that swept the nation. Like the bicycle, the narrator also serves as a representation of the outside world that has entered the community. Even though Dunnet Landing society is difficult to infiltrate, this figure from the modern world still manages to find a place in this supposedly aging society.

Analyzing how Jackson's novel resists nostalgia through the characters' mobility reveals that other local color texts might also favor the present over an antiquated past.

Jackson's novel also reminds readers that mobility is always implicitly linked to power dynamics, especially within the confines of a colonial system. Furthermore, movement can serve as a source of resistance to oppressive forces. Just as Ramona relocates herself to avoid interacting with the Anglo interlopers, Joanna uses her mobility to challenge oppressive gender hierarchies when she leaves the mainland. Instead of sacrificing herself to a society that associates an unmarried woman with shame, her self-exile performs the proto-feminist desire to reject gender norms.

While mobility liberates some characters from unjust conditions, it simultaneously serves as a reminder of oppressive situations. For example, even though *The Country of the Pointed Firs*' nonlinear structure appears to support a Native style of temporality, we cannot forget that the present characters walk over the shells and relics of this older society. Through an analysis of mobility's connection to power, readers see Sandra Zagarell's claim that *The Country of the Pointed Firs* is an inclusive community that simultaneously excludes "those significantly different from community members" ("*Country's* Portrayal" 40). While I argue in the previous chapter that Jewett calls for a non-racialized definition of diversity, we should not exclude the novel from larger conversations about gender, race, and class. If we look closely, these issues are subtly present. For example, as I note in chapter four, Jewett's narrator does have access to a different type of capital than the rest of the community, establishing her as a privileged visitor. Additionally, Mari Harris's lagging behind the Captain during Mrs. Begg's

funeral might not stem from her impatience, but rather from her status as a racial outsider.

Because social categories of race, class, and gender are only indirectly present in Jewett's text, it is useful to juxtapose Jewett's novel with Jackson's *Ramona*. By putting a text in which social categories are relatively covert in conversation with a text that overtly explores racial, class, and gender hierarchies, we see exactly how social categories shape mobility. For example, in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, no one questions the narrator's right to travel and she makes no justifications for her summer retreat other than wanting an escape from her urban existence. The narrator "is affiliated in the city with Veblen's 'superior pecuniary class,' the people of large wealth and the leisure accoutrements that testify to that wealth," says Richard Brodhead (145), adding that "she can command someone else's home as a second home for her leisure, and does so with a confident exercise of her rights" (146). Thus, even though Jewett's narrator and Ramona both assert agency through mobility, much of the narrator's mobility stems from an agency inherent to her class status.

In terms of gender, the narrator of *The Country of the Pointed Firs*'s femininity is never questioned. She can perform the domestic task of gathering herbs, but tells her landlady when such a role interferes with her writing. Ramona, on the other hand, has to justify her mobility with a domestic agenda. She can travel, but not for a summer vacation. Ramona's movement gains validity in the eyes of white readers because it is for her family's betterment and for the fulfillment of an Anglo domestic ideal. Thus, even though Ramona subverts Anglo domesticity by weaving in elements of her Native

culture, she still has to prove herself as a white woman before she can travel like Jewett's narrator. While Jewett's female narrator moves freely about Dunnet Landing, Ramona's status as an Indian woman makes her vulnerable to unscrupulous white males. While Alessandro is away, a white man named Jake aggressively pursues Ramona. He continually rides past her door and one day approaches her with an offer of marriage. Ramona spends the rest of her brief time in the valley fearing this man and feels safe only when she moves to the mountaintop (323). While Jewett's narrator moves to escape the stress of her industrial world, Ramona's mobility takes on more dire significance when it helps her escape from sexual predators.

Placing Ramona's mobility in comparison to that of Jewett's narrator reminds readers that while female characters use spatial relocations to improve their lives and gain agency, they also move in a world of economic, gendered, and racial hierarchies. In the following chapter, I expand on how mobility and social hierarchies are intrinsically linked in Sarah Barnwell Elliott's *The Durket Sperret*. However, instead of showing how class enables mobility (as it does with Jewett's narrator), I show how mobility destabilizes supposedly unyielding systems of class in regionalist novels, undermining the notion that this literature perpetuates representations of fixed economic categories.

## Notes

<sup>i.</sup> I do not separate Ramona's selfhood from a collective selfhood since the novel equates individualization with a dangerous, colonizing assimilation mission. While I recognize that viewing Ramona as a representation of the larger Native culture risks essentializing a collective of diverse cultures, this move helps readers understand how Jackson's Native characters resist colonial forces in ways that many critics (and even Jackson herself) do not acknowledge.

<sup>ii.</sup> The heroine exists in a privileged space like Sui Sin Far's Mrs. Spring Fragrance, who navigates multiple cultures and enjoys upper-class luxuries. Unlike the other Native Americans who have to continue to defend their dwindling land from the Anglo population, Ramona's future husband, Felipe, whisks her away to a more welcoming country where his aristocratic roots enable her to join the Mexican elite. Even her first husband, Alessandro, is somewhat privileged as an educated, musically-inclined Indian who appears more European than Native (Mathes 84). Ramona often struggles to understand the injustice of the Native people's situation, revealing her privilege as an individual who rarely encountered such hatred. When she asks Alessandro why he will not work for whites in San Bernardino, he replies, "Majella has not seen. No man will pay an Indian but half wages" (295). Later, she asks how the American settler, Merrill, can brand Indian cattle and why the law enforcement cannot force the Americans to return the stock. Alessandro corrects her naiveté saying, "There is no help for us, Majella, only to hide" (322). In many ways, Ramona's outsider status makes it difficult for her to understand the plight of the Native peoples with whom she aligns.

iii. In her study of Western women's literature, Baym asserts that "whatever her intentions, *Ramona* had no impact on Native Cultures" (191). Similarly, Kaplan argues that Jackson "cannot imagine Native American agency except as insanity," citing Alessandro's eventual mental decline ("Nation, Region, and Empire" 260-261). Kaplan also claims that Jackson's romanticizing of the California mission system neglects its violence, saying that the natives "occupy either a natural innocence outside of history or are a culture completely absorbed by the exotic Spanish mission" ("Nation, Region, and Empire" 260-261).

iv. Such a leap can of course be dangerous. First of all, although Jackson spent considerable time with the Mission Indian population during her stint as special commissioner to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, she wrote as a non-Native with a specific liberatory agenda. Secondly, using any individual to represent a population of many tribal, cultural, and linguistic differences risks gross essentialism.

v. Given Jackson's interest in justice for the dispossessed, it is odd that her text only briefly addresses the theft of land from Mexican Americans after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848). Instead of recognizing the property the Mexican government had granted to the Californios, the U.S. government created a land commission in 1851 to investigate these land grants. Unable to prove land ownership, Many Californios lost their land (Sánchez and Pita 18-19). Others had to sell their estates piece by piece to pay for litigation costs and taxes (Kropp 27). Jackson's uninterest in the plight of the Mexican Americans is even odder considering the friendships she sustained with Californios. The author was so close with Antonio Coronel, a prominent Californio,

that she wanted to use his household as the setting for the Moreno estate (Kropp 32). However, Phoebe Kropp argues that while friends with the Californios, Jackson favored drawing attention to the unjust treatment of Native Americans, subverting the Californios' discontent to mere background material (33). Similarly, Valerie Mathes says, "Although fascinated by the missions, Jackson was more interested in the condition of their former occupants" (Mathes 45). For Jackson, "Californio life was scenery, and her story was not about Californios' real lives or troubles but about Indian pathos" (Kropp 36). Given that the Californios intentionally separated themselves from Indian blood and aligned themselves more with European ancestry (Kropp 30), Jackson might have also seen the privileged Californios as less in need of literary representation. The Senora Moreno even demonstrates this privilege when she declares herself racially superior to the Indian "savages" (118).

<sup>vi.</sup> In her introduction to the Broadview edition of *Ramona*, Siobhan Senier argues that Jackson would have most likely resisted the cultural push for civilizing the Indians through allotment if she had lived long enough to see its effects (19).

<sup>vii.</sup> In addition to allotment, Indian reformers advocated an American education for indigenous children and the restriction of Native religions; these goals aimed to make Native Americans into contributing members of American society (Padgett 852).

<sup>viii.</sup> This prediction eventually came true. Within four decades after the Act's passage, the allotted 138 mission acres of Native land eventually shrank to one-third of its original size as land was sold to non-Natives and parceled out to miniscule proportions (Nichols 167).



<sup>ix.</sup> While the allotment system was a spiritual and psychological blow to Natives, it was also a form of economic destruction. Allotment forced tribes of hunters and gatherers from northern California such as the Piutes and the Modocs to abandon their lifestyle. Confined to a single location, these tribes could no longer locate the tule, grass seeds, berries, deer and rabbit that had sustained their existence ("Short Overview" n.p.) The introduction of Anglo stock animals such as sheep and cows also crowded out the game and naturally-growing plants that sustained the nomadic diet ("Short Overview" n.p.)

<sup>x.</sup> Native scholar George Tinker argues that Western individualism not only destroyed indigenous communal ties but also resulted in ecological devastation. Individualism privileged control over the natural world while Native peoples often saw themselves as part of a larger ecological community (159). Although most contemporary ecocritics do not consider nineteenth-century literature in their discussions of environmental justice, Karen Kilcup points out that many texts from this century actually demonstrate concern about the destruction of the natural world ("Writing" 363).

<sup>xi.</sup> I do not mean to imply that white Americans are always more inherently individualistic and Native peoples are dependent on networks of kinship, a reductive move according to Siobhan Senier (*Voices* 9); we should instead value the terms, "individualistic" and "communistic" as "political designations" rather than absolutes (Senier, *Voices* 9). As political categories, they can become dangerous tools, reducing diverse populations to essentialist categories and privileging the individual over the communal. They can also be powerful tools of resistance when Native people use

communal affiliation to negate colonizing forces' authority, as Ramona does when claiming to be Indian instead of Mexican or white.

<sup>xii.</sup> See also Amy Kaplan's "Manifest Domesticity" which articulates how nineteenth-century domesticity controlled the foreign Other by emphasizing a "home [that] contains within itself those wild or foreign elements that must be tamed" (582). For Kaplan, "domesticity not only monitors the borders between the civilized and the savage but also regulates traces of the savage within itself" (582).

<sup>xiii.</sup> Valerie Mathes argues that Jackson's sentimentalism nullifies her social critique by misplacing the focus from the Natives onto a romanticized colonial landscape (x). John Harvard asserts that the novel's sentimentalism goes awry by focusing not on the landscape, but rather on the Indians' victimization, which negates their potential for resistance. Furthermore, Harvard believes that the novel's "stock sentimental ending" in which Ramona marries Felipe "hurts the overarching rhetorical aim of the novel" (109). Building on Harvard's critique, Josephine Donovan notes that instead of seeing Ramona as proof of America's unjust settlement policies, we should read her as the quintessential sentimental heroine who lives happily ever after ("Breaking" 13). While Jackson had the chance to leave readers smarting from the pain of Ramona's struggles, the novel concedes to "the contemporaneous American demand for a happy ending," according to Allan Nevins (208).

<sup>xiv.</sup> Jackson's work with the Indian Reform movement may also have influenced her literary use of sentiment. Martin Padgett notes that "as an Indian reformer ... [Jackson] worked with an ongoing rhetorical tradition in which victimhood and oppression rather

than resistance were stressed" (869). In many ways, Jackson sentimentalized her characters so her readers would see them as capable of human emotion, ultimately contradicting the stereotype of Native people as inhumane savages.

<sup>xv</sup>. Although Ramona is self-sufficient enough to take her home on the road (resisting the position of helpless exile), nineteenth-century readers would have been unsettled by the colonial system's negation of "one's right to enjoy hard-earned domestic comforts" (Harvard 107). Thus, Ramona's mobility is simultaneously an active fight for domesticity and a critique of a system that refused domestic spaces to deserving wives and mothers.

<sup>xvi</sup>. Jackson's interest in making the readers "feel" for the dispossessed Indian population raises the question, how did this emotion translate into visible change? Still frustrated with *A Century of Dishonor's* failure, Jackson tried a different approach in *Ramona* -- to engage the readers in hopes that they would become interested in the heroine's plight. Horace E. Scudder felt raising awareness through art was a more effective means of social reform than calling for direct change. He writes that the novel's subtle calls for political change create a story in which "the wrongs sink deeper into the mind than if they had been the subject of the most eloquent diatribe" ("Recent" 130). As with Ramona's resistance through displacement, Jackson's novel might not incite the concrete change that today's readers wish for. However, both heroine and text operated within the constraints of a country that opposed Native agency. Given these limitations, the seemingly insignificant acts of removing one's self from an oppressive situation or calling for awareness are profound.

<sup>xvii.</sup> Some might say that *Ramona* is not really a regionalist text because its resistance to spatial, cultural, and temporal fixity blurs boundaries between the region and the outside world. Without some semblance of containment, there is no way to distinguish what is regional, national or global. However, even though the novel challenges assumptions about the genre's bounded spaces, it still deals with the cultures, values, dialect, and landscape specific to a region, following Donna Campbell's definition of regionalism ("Regionalism"). Thus, *Ramona* demonstrates many of the traits of nineteenth-century regionalist literature, while it makes these traits more applicable to an increasingly global world by refusing to authenticate or fossilize the cultures the region embodies. I take this issue up further in the conclusion.

<sup>xviii.</sup> It is important to note that Foster distinguishes his concept of regionalism from late-nineteenth century literary regionalism, dismissing the latter as a form of "provincial boosterism" (272). He sees regionalism more as a reductive genre of local color rather than the politicized genre that Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse see in *Writing Out of Place*; Foster asserts that nineteenth-century regionalist writers co-opted local cultures in response to increasing social anxiety about modernity's disdain for small-town America. Foster views nineteenth-century regionalism as more limiting than open to the cultural pluralism necessary for tribal communities' existence. Foster is not alone in his skepticism of local color literature. Gary Totten also finds high regionalism incompatible with Native self-determination because of its "nationalistic impulses" that promote a white nation over an indigenous nation (100). However, I argue that Jackson's nineteenth-century regionalism is far more in line with Foster's Native-centric regionalism and

Totten's call for indigenous sovereignty than either might think. Instead of writing about local spaces as a form of local "boosterism" or oppressive nationalism, Jackson uses the region to destabilize notions of cultural authenticity that boosterism and nationalism foster. She shows that regions are not spaces that fix identities, but rather sites of physical and metaphorical dislocation in which identities are constantly re-enunciated.

CHAPTER IV

MOBILIZING CLASS IN SARAH BARNWELL ELLIOTT'S *THE DURKET*

*SPERRET*

In 1904, *Harper's Magazine* published an essay by Emma Bell Miles about Appalachia's folk music. The essay says that this "peculiar" music comes from a mountaineer who "is fond of turning the joke on himself. He makes fun of his own poverty, his own shiftlessness, his ignorance, his hard luck, and his crimes" (Miles 118). This figure also produces a supernatural music with "oddly changing keys, the endings that leave the ear in expectation of something to follow, [and] the quavers and falsettos" that speak of "a haunting hint of the spirit world" (Miles 119). Finally, the essayist argues that the mountaineer can become downright frightening when seized by a fit of musical passion. Miles observes that the mountaineers "rock to and fro softly, crooning and moaning, until the impulse comes upon them to leap into the air," ultimately leading to "convulsions and even temporary insanity" (119). While the author writes to familiarize Americans with Appalachian music, her depictions of the mountaineers ultimately render them unfamiliar, good-for-nothings, uncivilized, and prone to frenzies. To illustrate these qualities, the essay cites an Appalachian folk tune in which the singer says, "I'll tune up my fiddle and rosin my bow, and make myself welcome wherever I go" (Miles 118). The singer's unnatural behavior and shiftlessness make assimilation into civilized

society impossible. The vagrant musician must *make* himself welcome wherever he goes rather than be welcomed into a respectable community.

I begin with this article from *Harper's* for several reasons. First, it demonstrates how people sometimes equate mobility with poverty and spatial fixity with economic stability. Secondly, the article shows that late nineteenth-century Americans saw Appalachians as unsophisticated, impoverished, social deviants. Most importantly, the essay represents the mindsets that Appalachian writer, Sarah Barnwell Elliott, discredits in her 1898 novel, *The Durket Sperret*.

For Elliott, the idea of making one's self "welcome wherever" he or she goes does not preclude participation in established economic systems, nor does a mobile adaptability to different communities automatically equate with the "poverty," "shiftlessness," or "hard luck" that others see as indigenous to the Appalachians. Instead, she uses movement to illuminate Appalachia's many economic systems. Poverty and economic want do exist in this region, but the characters' perambulations also reveal flexible categorical boundaries. The characters' relocations also show that Appalachians are not as foreign or exotic as *Harper's* readers would think because the regional characters encounter the same class systems as the larger nation. Through her characters' mobility, Elliott demands revisions of many of the stereotypes of poverty and scant economic opportunity that plagued Appalachia at the turn of the century. Because Elliott resists rather than replicates wide spread assumptions about Appalachia and because she destabilizes the presumed economic fixity of regional spaces, her much-neglected work merits recovery and analysis.

This chapter of *The Path She Had Chosen* builds on my previous arguments in which I demonstrate how Jewett and Jackson's novels refute critical assumptions about regionalism's perpetuation of limited perspectives, demographic homogeneity, cultural authenticity, and nostalgia. Elliott's work similarly refutes monolithic conceptions of regions by destabilizing stereotypes of Appalachia's uniform economic poverty. I show how representations of the characters' mobility expose the fragility and flexibility of class structures in two different ways. First, existing class structures unravel when characters either gain or lose social mobility through spatial maneuverings. Contrary to the belief that physical mobility is an extension of social mobility and vice-versa, the main character Hannah proves this equation unreliable when she loses her upper-class status after peddling goods and falls even further in status after an innocent walk with a gentleman leads to slanderous rumors. Secondly, the characters' movements expose the permeable nature of class hierarchies. When the characters travel, they gain access to commodities, learn to appreciate or reject luxury items, demonstrate leisure or the need to work, associate with members of different classes and reveal their upbringing—all actions that determine one's social and class standing. Boundaries between lower, middle, and upper class dissolve when characters perform these behaviors through mobility.

After analyzing Elliott's attention to Appalachia's late nineteenth-century class dynamics, I extend my analysis to the larger discussion of class in regionalist literature. Aside from demonstrating the mercurial nature of Appalachia's class systems, Elliott's novel reveals that these types of regional spaces are not homogenous in class composition or immune to the capitalistic tendencies of a rapidly industrializing nation. Thus, *The*



*Durket Sperret* demonstrates the problematic nature of hierarchies that position one region as more socially and industrially advanced than another. I conclude by applying Elliott's interest in unstable regional economic systems to Jewett and Jackson's texts; when readers stop perceiving regions as sites of economic fixity, new readings of power structures within the aforementioned novels surface.

### **Elliott as a Southern, Working-Class Writer**

As a social reformer, Elliott maintained an active interest in class structures, focusing on rights for lower-class, African-American and female workers. In her groundbreaking article, "An Epoch-Making Settlement Between Labor and Capital" (1910), Elliott gathered letters, newspaper reports and statements about a coal mine explosion in Streator, Illinois. In this article, she called for accountability for unsafe working conditions. Outrage about this explosion eventually resulted in the first court ruling from the Illinois legislature that forced mine owners to improve working conditions and compensate the victims and families of the disaster (Mackenzie, *SBE* 124). The author's writing about working-class individuals was not only effective in enacting social change, it was also unconventional. Unlike other writers such as Rebecca Harding Davis and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps who depicted female workers as casualties of a cruel industrial system, Elliott notably does not portray her working characters as the "culprits" of a failing domestic order, or as "tragic heroines" (Hapke xiii, 3). Furthermore, Elliott's novel gives a voice to the agrarian laborer, a figure largely absent from working-class literature that focused on factory workers (Howe 102).

Unlike Jewett and Jackson who lived as wealthy elites, Elliott had experience with both aristocracy and poverty, a dual existence that provided a unique vantage point to explore Southern class divides.<sup>i</sup> Elliott was born into a well-off family of planters whose lineage dated back to the settlement of South Carolina and Georgia and spent parts of her childhood with wealthy relatives in Beaufort, South Carolina (Mackenzie, *SBE* 16). However, she also experienced poverty first-hand when her father lost a great deal of money trying to open a girls' school (Mackenzie, *SBE* 22). After the school's failure, her father served as a Bishop in the Episcopalian church, generating so little income that the family had to depend on handouts from local relatives (Mackenzie, *SBE* 26). Much like Hannah, Elliott's family faced further financial distress with the untimely passing of her father. After the chaos of her father's death and the Civil War, Elliott moved to be with her brother in Tennessee (Mackenzie, Intro ix).

While there, Elliott experienced multiple facets of the Appalachian economy. Prior to her success with the publication of her novel, *Jerry* (1893), Elliott lived frugally. Her bank account rarely held more than one hundred dollars at a time and she often wrote on the front and the back of pages to save money on paper (Mackenzie, *SBE* 44). Her family was so poor that they had to rent part of their house to boarders (Mackenzie, *SBE* 34). Despite these fiscal struggles, Elliott still had the privilege of education. The author grew up in a family that valued scholarship; her father even helped found the University of Sewanee (now the University of the South) (Mackenzie, Intro viii). Elliott served as the editor for one of the university's publications (Mackenzie, *SBE* 123). Later in life, the author moved to New York to pursue her literary career (Mackenzie, *SBE* 45). She also

traveled widely, visiting places such as Italy, London, and Israel (Mackenzie, *SBE* 40-42).

Similar to the well-traveled, Sarah Orne Jewett, Elliott did not let her desire for travel prevent her from writing about her home in the Cumberland Mountains. However, despite her masterful depictions of Appalachian life, Elliott's work still suffers from severe critical neglect. To date, there are only a handful of articles on her work and one major biography of her life, published by Clara Childs Mackenzie in 1980.<sup>ii</sup> Part of this neglect could be because almost all of her writings have gone out of print. In 1915 her publisher, Holt, destroyed all of the plates of her work (Mackenzie, *SBE* Preface).<sup>iii</sup> It is also possible that her work has received so little scholarly attention because it confounds expectations for the regionalist genre.

In the first place, her writing offered an unprecedented look at the New Woman through the regionalist lens. With the exception of Kate Chopin's work, the image of the New Woman rarely appeared in postwar Southern literature; the idea that females could opt for education and a career outside of the home was somewhat foreign to a culture "where women were still denied adequate education, destined only for domestic roles and sheltered from playing any significant part in public life" (Mackenzie, *SBE* Preface). In the second place, Elliott's multi-region writing makes it difficult to associate her with a specific part of the South. Unlike Grace King, Kate Chopin, Thomas Nelson Page, and Thomas Dixon, whom readers associated with specific southern regions such as Louisiana and the Old South, Elliott's writing transgressed regional boundaries.

If Elliott had wanted to write about a single region, she could have focused on the Southern lowlands, where she lived for many years. However, she did not limit herself in that manner, choosing instead to write about a variety of Southern spaces, including Appalachia (Mackenzie, *SBE* 85).<sup>iv</sup> Furthermore, Unlike Jewett and Jackson who speak about regions' cultural, geographic, and historic diversity in general terms, Elliott makes the radical move of writing about the explicit realm of class, a neglected area of study for regionalist literature. Thus, with her interest in the New Woman and the critically uncharted territories of Appalachia and regional class systems, Elliott's work has received far less attention than it deserves. However, her ability to manipulate genre conventions of regionalism justifies more, not less, critical attention.

Because so few have read her novel, a plot summary of *The Durket Sperret* is in order. In Elliott's novel, the heroine, Hannah Warren, comes from a formerly well-off family that has fallen on hard times since her father's death. To ameliorate her family's poverty, Hannah can marry her wealthy but violent and selfish cousin, Si Durket. Instead of settling for Si, Hannah demeans herself (according to her grandmother) by going to the university town of Sewanee to peddle goods. While there, she meets the aristocratic couple, Agnes Welling and Max Dudley, who become intrigued with Hannah's natural beauty and grace. When food becomes especially scarce at Hannah's home, she becomes Agnes's live-in servant rather than marry Si. Outraged by her rejection, Si spreads false rumors about Hannah, resulting in her dismissal. Out of sympathy, Max offers to marry Hannah; however, she surprises everyone by choosing to marry the faithful but poor farm hand, Dock Wilson, opting for a life of poverty over leisure and comfort. As she moves

back and forth from her family's home in the Lost Cove to Sewanee, Hannah undergoes many changes in class status and re-evaluates her own understanding of economic hierarchies.

### ***As Others See Us: Class in Nineteenth-Century Appalachia***

As America neared the end of the nineteenth century, its vast economic inequity made many doubt that industrial growth and technological innovation would improve everyone's quality of life (R. Smith 349). Instead of an era that offered prosperity for all, class conflict became the "hallmark of the Gilded Age" in which the rich grew richer while the poor became more impoverished (Reeve 308). In the middle of the nineteenth century, locally-centered aristocracies of "old money" made up the wealthy class. However, by the turn of the century, the social elite had become more blended with the admission of corporation owners, new professionals, and members of the middle class who wanted to distinguish themselves from the working class (Brodhead 123). Unlike in the past, this new group of elites "was not an already integrated 'group' but a group in the process of self-grouping, a coming-together of elements with a common need to identify themselves as superior" (Brodhead 123). As we see with the upper-class population in *The Durket Sperret*, membership in this social group was never fixed but rather an act of constant negotiation.

While late nineteenth-century America saw a new order of elites, it also witnessed the proliferation of working-class solidarity as the impoverished united to counteract rising crop prices, lower wages, and workplace injuries (Reeve 310). In the 1880s, the

government tried to protect workers and small business owners by passing the Interstate Commerce Commission Act and the Sherman Antitrust law, which prevented price-fixing and monopolies (Morgan 4). However, this legislation was not sufficient to prevent the mobilization of unsatisfied workers who saw social and economic equality as their democratic right (Reeve 308).

When Agnes unjustly fires Hannah, this dismissal mirrors the nationwide practice of oppressive employers who mistreated their workers. In documenting these power dynamics, Elliott asserts Appalachia's participation in the same economic issues shaping the U.S. at large, challenging the region's supposed immunity to industrialization and class conflict.<sup>v</sup> Prior to publishing her novel as *The Durket Sperret*, Elliott significantly titled the work *As Others See Us* (Mackenzie, *SBE* 98). The novel not only addresses how others see Appalachia, but also corrects false assumptions about the region's uniform poverty and economic misfortune. Before understanding how the movement of Elliott's characters undermines stereotypes about the region's primitive and classless economy, readers must first comprehend how these mindsets developed and the ways in which they directly contradicted Appalachia's economic reality.

Just as outsiders such as the narrator in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* perceived Dunnet Landing as separate from the developing world, nineteenth-century Appalachia also suffered the stigma of isolation. For non-Appalachians, this separation from areas of development rendered a unique economic order of “barefoot and guitar strumming, murdering and moonshining, poor and illiterate” “hillbillies” (Stoneback 1). These contemporary misconceptions about the region's uniform poverty and lack of economic

opportunity still exist, showing the prevailing might of the prejudices against which Elliott worked.<sup>vi</sup>

While nineteenth-century Protestant missionaries and developers contributed to the general public's understanding of Appalachia, local colorists such as Mary Noailles Murfree, James Lane Allen, and John Fox were the main sources of misconceptions about Appalachia's isolation and lack of economic opportunity. Just three years before *The Durket Sperret's* publication, James Lane Allen described in an article for *Harper's* that the mountaineers are:

living to-day (sic) as their forefathers lived before them a hundred years ago; hearing little of the world, caring nothing for it; responding feebly to the influences of civilization near the highways of travel in and around the towns... [they are] sure to live here, if uninvaded and unaroused, in the same condition for a hundred or more years to come; utterly lacking the spirit of development from within...most of the people are abjectly poor, and they appear to have no sense of accumulation.<sup>vii</sup> (261- 262)

From 1870 to 1890, local colorists published over two hundred stories and travel sketches that depicted Appalachians "as a rude, backward, romantic, and sometimes violent race who had quietly lived for generations in isolation from the mainstream of American life" (Eller xvi). These writers relied on American readers' desire for superiority, exploiting the "discrepancy between what contemporaries had begun to call the 'promise' of American life, on the one hand, and an apparent reality of degradation and degeneracy in the mountain region, on the other" (Shapiro 5).

Another major trend in late nineteenth-century depictions of Appalachia (aside from illustrating the region's isolation) was to portray the region as homogenously

impoverished or lacking the economic opportunity for social advancement. William Goodell Frost, President of Berea College in Berea, Kentucky, unknowingly perpetuated the idea of a uniform Appalachia when he used the phrase “Appalachian America” in an 1893 speech. He called for the recognition of Appalachia as a region of eight states with similar cultures and history. However, in requesting this recognition, he also created “a coherent region inhabited by a homogeneous population possessing a uniform culture” (Shapiro ix). Even as late as 1935, one observer of Appalachia noted that “the mountain farm family recognizes no social classes either in the community or out” (N. Miller 24). In many ways this depiction of a homogenous population mirrors a trend that some contemporary literary critics see in the larger genre of regionalism. In chapter two on *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, I argue that the narrator's mobility helps her see a diverse population, refuting the critical desire to read regionalism as an essentializing body of literature. Similarly, by troubling mindsets about Appalachia's universal poverty and lack of social mobility, Elliott's novel debunks assumptions about how regionalist texts depict uniform populations.

Rather than perpetuate totalizing myths about the mountain people, Elliott's texts portray the “Coveite” population as realistically as possible. The Coveites were descendents of the Scotch-Irish settlers who inhabited the mountain coves of Tennessee's Cumberland Mountains (Eller 8). These families settled around the foot of the slopes and farmed the rich soil of the coves' basins. But this settlement pattern did not mean isolation. They maintained close contact with local families and community members in different coves, developing stores, mills, churches, and schools (Eller 8). Contrary to the



prevailing beliefs about the population's isolation, the Coveites were also not immune to the social changes of economic development.

Illustrating this resistance to isolation, on July 4, 1909, Sewanee University held a conference titled "The South Today." Participants addressed issues of economics, the effects of Reconstruction, labor problems, and railroads. They published the conference's results in *The Forensic Quarterly*, of which Elliott later became the editor. This journal primarily published articles that called for economic justice in order to cultivate a better spiritual life (Mackenzie, *SBE* 123-125). While this journal was not widely read, it still demonstrated that even in the small town of Sewanee, Tennessee, individuals were concerned with the social ramifications of modern industrialization.

Elliott's novel and other writing such as *The Forensic Quarterly* demonstrate that in reality, "Appalachia was never isolated from the world market system" (Billings and Blee 23). Instead, "mountain life was integrated into regional development paths and shaped by interdependent systems of subsistence production and market exchange" (Billings and Blee 23). In Elliott's county, the residents raised corn, wheat, and livestock, revealing a complex market economy even in this primarily agrarian system (J. Smith). Cotton farmers exported cotton down the Elk River to New Orleans and many survived on the sale of surplus farm goods (J. Smith; Pudup 278). Hannah takes on this activity when she peddles apples and butter in Sewanee, showing that even the poorer farming families "were no strangers to the world of commercial exchange" (Pudup 278).

Outside of Elliott's (and Hannah's) county, Appalachian Tennessee also boasted "gristmills, woolcarding mills, sawmills, and tanyards" (Lewis 60). Of course, Tennessee

was also a massive producer of coal in the late nineteenth century. Although the Panic of 1893 brought fewer investors to the mountains, many well-established coal mines continued to thrive even during this difficult economic time due to the nation's dependence on the fuel (Pudup 285, Drake 143).<sup>viii</sup> When railroads developed to facilitate the exportation of coal, myths of the region's economic isolation became entirely unfounded. According to Ronald Lewis, "the unprecedented capital investment in the railroad...lifted expansion to a crescendo and transformed much of the region from a rural agricultural economy to one in which major sub-regions became dependent on industry" (59).

By the time Elliott was writing, Appalachia had many railroads. In 1873, the Chesapeake & Ohio (C & O) Railroad connected Virginia ports to the Ohio River, enabling trade with the Atlantic. The Norfolk and Western Railroad also developed Appalachia from the East while the Louisville and Nashville Railroad went through Kentucky from the West. The Western North Carolina Railroad opened up Asheville for many travelers in 1880 and by 1882, Tennessee had the Tennessee State Line Railroad (Lewis 64). The proliferation of railroads not only aided in the exportation of Appalachia's resources, but it also brought dry goods and labor back into the region, further connecting it to American culture (Lewis 64). Once railroads linked remote regions, "the towns that developed along them became enclaves of mainstream American mercantile culture, complete with schools, churches, and stores" that resembled other small towns across America (Drake 133). Given the variety of industry and modes of

transportation found in late-nineteenth century Appalachia, it is clear that the region was not isolated from the larger market economy.

Nor was the region universally impoverished or a site of fixed class hierarchies. After visiting Appalachia, Randolph Shotwell, a confederate soldier, writer, and politician, once observed that no section of the United States contains a population “so widely diversified in politics, wealth, morals, and general intelligence” (qtd. in Inscoe and Kinney 12). Cratis D. Williams, the “Dean of Appalachian Studies,” said that historically, Appalachia has given rise to three main classes: the town elites, the farmers, and the “Branchwater Mountaineers” who were the “rural and anti-progressive” residents who fostered the main stereotypes of Appalachians (Drake 120).<sup>ix</sup> Contrary to local color writers who perpetuated myths of universal poverty, Appalachia actually had a few wealthy families with power, influence, and the ability to provide their descendents with educational opportunities, just like other developed Southern areas (Eller 11). Tennessee in particular drew many of these wealthy offspring to its universities: Terrill College in Decherd; Mary Sharp College in Winchester; and of course, the University of the South at Sewanee (J. Smith). During the late nineteenth century, this aristocratic population of Appalachia flaunted its access to leisure and wealth in the hot springs of western North Carolina and Virginia. People flocked to these vacation areas, not so much for their health benefits, but to connect with other aristocrats (Drake 136). Even Mary Noailles Murfee summered at Beersheba Springs in Grundy County, Tennessee (Drake 138). Agnes Welling and Max Dudley represent this educated class in Elliott's novel.

Hannah's families, the Warrens and the Durkets, represent another class that Williams calls the successful farmers. Both families have now fallen onto hard times after the death of Hannah's father, but they were once powerful landholders. Liza and Dock Wilson represent what Williams called the "Branchwater Mountaineers," the lowest class of the Cove. These characters are the novel's poorest, surviving from peddling and subsistence farming, but they are not the uncivilized, primitive moonshiners that other local colorists depicted. They are hardworking and loyal, so much so that Dock Wilson earns Hannah's hand in marriage over the aristocratic Max Cartright. Furthermore, while the novel reveals three main classes, these categories are rarely fixed; based on their mobility, Elliott's characters move (literally and figuratively) within these classes, often inhabiting multiple socioeconomic positions simultaneously.

### **Theorizing Class in *The Durket Sperret***

The characters' ambiguous socioeconomic positions in *The Durket Sperret* exemplifies why many scholars shy away from class in literature. As Wai Chee Dimock and Michael Gilmore note in *Rethinking Class*, the subject is difficult to define empirically (2). They assert that class is not so much a "reality," but rather a social identity that is "made-real," through a series of relations. It is part of how we form our identities but not a reliable source of identity construction (Dimock and Gilmore 2). Most Americans know that our class standing has something to do with wealth and privilege, but generally society lacks the vocabulary necessary to talk about "its injuries and its struggles" (Lang 6). Instead of talking about class, Americans prefer to transfer its

oppressive nature to "discourses of race, gender, [and] ethnicity," which we mistakenly assume are more fixed (Lang 6). Aside from being unable to express class's complex connection to other social identifiers such as race, literary critics also neglect class due to readers' lack of interest in the subject. With the decline in support for Marxism, many scholars and activists question the working class's ability to generate social change. Thus, "the vocabulary of class has come to seem no more than a flat description, a matter of taxonomy, shorn of the animating coloration of will and necessity" (Dimock and Gilmore 1).

Although current critics see a general loss of class consciousness's ability to generate change, Elliott's characters still demonstrate hints of it. According to Karl Marx, class consciousness involves taking "up a position near the others with its particular claims" (Marx, "Towards" 80). When members of a higher social order share consciousness, this solidarity can lead to the oppression of the lower class (Marx, "Towards" 80). However, most class consciousness stems from the proletariat, who feel a "most decided antagonism to all other classes" and are aware of "the necessity of a fundamental revolution" (Marx, *German* 195). While Hannah does not overtly call for the overthrow of the bourgeois, she does enact a miniature revolution by choosing to marry Dock Wilson over Max Cartright. Even though she knows she will likely live in poverty, she undermines the upper class by giving the poorest individual her hand. More than a Marxian class consciousness, Hannah and her fellow Coveites display what Stuart Blumin calls "class awareness" (10). Adopting his definition from Anthony Giddens, Blumin argues that class awareness involves acknowledging shared cultural experiences

based on access to capital, like class consciousness (10). However, unlike the Marxian class consciousness, class awareness does not manifest itself in political forms nor generate conflict between the classes (Blumin 10). Even though Hannah aligns herself with the proletarian Dock Wilson, she bears Max and the class he represents no ill will. Hannah responds to his proposal: "You hev been mighty good to me, Mr. Dudley... but thar's a fur way 'twixt you an' me--thar's a diffrunce as wide as all this valley...An' you ain't fur folks like me" (126). Hannah acknowledges the generosity of Max's offer, but also recognizes that she inhabits a different social space.

Just as Hannah oscillates between class consciousness and class awareness, the novel also alternates between definitions of class. On the one hand, the novel creates class divides resembling the hierarchies of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in Marx's *Communist Manifesto*. At the beginning of the novel, Hannah considers herself part of the bourgeoisie because she controls the means of production; she has "bacon, and apples, and potatoes that could be sold," representing the capital necessary for peddling (3). When Max Cartright first sees Hannah peddling, he thinks that she must define class as "quantity" musing that "in her world the rich demanded no better quality, only a greater quantity, and, after a certain stage of plentifulness was reached, life was taken with folded hands" (19). Regardless of the type of goods she owns, Hannah considers herself rich as long as she has more capital than other poor people.

In contrast to Hannah, Sewanee's inhabitants define their upper-class status through what Thorstein Veblen calls "conspicuous leisure." Published just one year after *The Durket Sperret*, Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) says that the

wealthy exhibit their elite social status through the "conspicuous abstention from labour" which shows that they do not need to work (*Theory* ch. 2). The wealthy Sewanee residents do not have to peddle goods like Hannah; they spend their days contemplating poetry, philosophy, and dwelling in the "high tree-tops of culture" (49). Their only labor is to civilize the lower classes. When Agnes tells Max that she knows "educated people are happier and better," he tells her, "your duty is to begin at once to teach. If once we realize what is best to be done for our fellows, we *must* do it" (29). Thus, Sewanee's aristocracy measures labor by duty rather than necessity.

*The Durket Sperret* also defines affluence as both an inheritable trait and a quality gained through association. According to Pierre Bourdieu, when people are raised with wealth or associated with aristocracy, they achieve "taste," "one of the most vital stakes in the struggles fought in the field of the dominant class and the field of cultural production" (11). Unlike "conspicuous consumption," which any one with goods can demonstrate, people gain "taste" through exposure to high society that teaches "the aptitude for taking a specifically aesthetic point of view on objects already constituted aesthetically" (Bourdieu 31, 40). While Hannah is more in awe of Sewanee's finery than a purveyor of it, she does display personality characteristics associated with upper-class grooming. When she is bringing in the hogs and milking the cows, she possesses a quietness that "was a class habit" of a higher economic group (3). The narrator then affirms that "the Warrens had always been well-to-do," as if Hannah would inherit these traits simply through her upper-class lineage (3). Ironically, the lower-class acts of milking cows and bringing in hogs causes this upper-class habit of quietness to surface.

By the end of the novel, uncertainty abounds about who inhabits which class, and whether class means the ownership of goods, the possession of a blue-blood heritage, or the acquisition of aristocratic contacts. By troubling definitions of class, Elliott proves that Appalachian social systems were not just diverse in composition, but also in definition.

The only certainty about class in Elliott's writing is its uncertainty; furthermore, out of all of the many factors that destabilize class, mobility provides one of the best ways to deconstruct the system. In Elliott's novel, one's spatial positioning does designate class status, but one must understand that this relationship is always changing with the characters' mobility. As Hannah says when she is forced to walk with Si, "If there's a bad place in the road, pick up yours foot an' cross it quick...thar' ain't no use in doubtin' – git over" (40). When a character finds him or herself in a bad financial position, she simply has to get moving as Hannah does when she decides to peddle and migrate to Sewanee.

A cursory reading of *The Durket Sperret* reveals physical mobility's connection to social mobility, especially when Hannah's grandfather says, "An' folks what seen fur tuck to fine wittles; an' folks what never seen fur was satisfy alonger bacon" (98). According to Hannah's "Gramper," those that have traveled learn to appreciate finer goods. Those who have not had the privilege of mobility are satisfied with what they have, simply because they do not know better. Initially, physical mobility equals social mobility or the upper-class refinement that discerns quality goods. However, his next statement complicates this formula: "But I dunno which gits the most satisfaxion; an' hit seems they



gits mixed somehow" (98). Thus, he destabilizes class as a fixed entity while simultaneously affirming it.

Elliott's novel does not merely speak about the juxtaposition of physical and social mobility; it also articulates how gender affects this formula. Traditionally, physical movement generates the ability to move metaphorically up the social ladder. Those who can travel for better economic opportunities and education typically rise to a higher-class status. If mobility did not contribute to social status, it at the very least demonstrates it, especially for women in late nineteenth-century Appalachia who showed their affluence by traveling to luxurious vacation sites. Elliott's text reverses this trend by assigning lower-class women more mobility than upper-class females; in the novel, Agnes Welling rarely leaves home, even though she clearly has the wealth and leisure to travel. While Hannah wanders all over the region, Agnes cannot even travel to the cove because her "brother will not permit it" (20). Despite Agnes's claim that the lower classes "live like moles," rarely venturing beyond their tiny domestic realms, Hannah possesses a mobility that Agnes will never share.

Like Agnes, Hannah could continue "forever in the old dull path" (22). Instead, she imitates Jackson's Ramona by following "the path she had chosen" and becoming a peddler. Such an occupation allows Hannah to "resist her grandmother and defy Si Durket. In short...[become] free" (22). Negotiating local spaces ultimately enables Hannah to redefine her lower-class status as well as prevent a marriage to Si. Hannah's mobility juxtaposed with Agnes's immobility shows that *The Durket Sperret* not only troubles fixed class divides, but also revises assumptions about how women use mobility

to generate agency. While I focus some of my analysis on the novel's secondary characters, most of my insight into Appalachia's multi-faceted class system comes from observations about Hannah's mobility. Hannah is the perfect subject to study because she has the uncanny ability to maneuver both literally and figuratively through various socioeconomic groups. More importantly, she refuses to let someone assign her to a specific class based on her regional identity. As she moves through various spaces, she reassesses her own class status and learns about the instability of class as a social category.

In the following section, I argue that the characters' mobility in the novel illuminates three major points about regional class systems. First, their movement demonstrates that maneuvering through space is not always an upper-class privilege, nor does it always help one move up the social ladder. For Hannah, moving to Sewanee means the decline of her elite lineage. By showing the multi-directional possibilities of Sewanee's social ladder, Elliott reminds us that social mobility is rarely predictable in local spaces. Secondly, the characters' perpetual movement shows the permeable nature of regional classes. With each move, Hannah either rises or declines in socioeconomic status, refuting the notion that local color economies have fixed or limited socioeconomic groupings. With its unstable class systems, the novel shows the dangers of using geographic locations to define class. In Sewanee, Tennessee, Hannah occupies several class positions during the course of the novel. Her many movements and subsequent changes in social status reveal that regional affiliations do not always solidify class belonging. Rather, it is one's mobility that affirms or destabilizes class ranking.

### **Mobilizing Class in *The Durket Sperret***

In *The Durket Sperret*, characters' mobility deconstructs rigid class rankings, revealing a class order that is anything but fixed in poverty or stagnant in socioeconomic divisions. Elliott's text also rejects the myth that physical mobility always equals upward social mobility. Historically, those with capital have been able to migrate towards better financial opportunities or expend surplus funds on travel. However, in Elliott's novel, mobility enables the characters to descend the social ladder just as quickly as they move, disabling any notions of economic predictability. When Hannah walks home from Sunday school with Agnes's books, she finds herself caught in the rain. Feeling sorry for her, Max accompanies her under his umbrella. This seemingly insignificant act causes a social uproar when Max's companions chide him for treating Hannah as a social equal. Although Hannah becomes Max's temporary equal, she later suffers from the resulting rumors. Max notes the pain he unknowingly causes Hannah simply by walking with her when he says, "how pitiful that she did not stay in her own sphere!" (101). Max's stroll with Hannah makes her lower-class status more evident, thus disproving the idea that physical mobility always guarantees social advancement.

Unlike many other regionalist texts that equate mobility with the upper-class urban outsider (Palmer 3), Elliott's novel refuses this connection between physical mobility and affluence. Although Hannah's grandmother does note Si's privilege--he has traveled as far as Chattanooga--readers know that we can trust neither Si Durket nor Mrs. Warren (39). Si's alcoholism and violent tendencies undermine any social status he might gain from travels and Mrs. Warren's understanding of wealth is based on an antiquated

system of inherited aristocracy. When listing the guests at a Durket family member's funeral, the narrator describes this outdated system: "The Budds would be there: not as rich as the Durkets, but more traveled, for they had been ...to Nashville and Chattanooga...Thus, although without the blood of the Durkets, the Budds had achieved a position that in some respects rivaled theirs" (58). Like Mrs. Warren, these individuals practice a social system that the rest of the novel rejects. While the Budds and the Durkets think they are upper class, Elliott speaks ironically about their purported cosmopolitanism. In the large world, Chattanooga is relatively close to their home in the Cumberland Mountains. They do not know that the truly wealthy exhibit luxury by *not* traveling as Agnes demonstrates when she spends most of her time indoors reading and debating philosophical ideas.

Ultimately, the novel pokes fun at people who think that travel always reflects economic privilege. Instead, Elliott's text advocates mobility as a force that can help one move either up or down in class standing--or inhabit multiple classes simultaneously. She shows that mobility affects the characters' conceptions of class in three major ways. First, Hannah's negotiations through space cause her to reassess her own class identity. Secondly, movement changes how others view Hannah's class status. Finally, Hannah's travels from Cove to town alter her views of other people's socioeconomic positions.

Hannah first realizes the instability of her class when she travels into Sewanee to peddle apples. Despite her poverty, she is accustomed to identifying with an aristocratic lineage and is surprised when she encounters people more elite than herself. The narrator observes: "That people lived who thought themselves better than the Warrens or Durkets

was a new sensation to Hannah.... Her astonishment stilled her wrath until the thought overwhelmed her, that perhaps these people would look on her and Lizer Wilson as the same!" (12). Seeing people wealthier than herself reminds Hannah that she is no longer upper-class and currently is the same as the trashy Lizer Wilson, a life-long peddler.

When a lower-class woman from the same cove catches Hannah peddling, Hannah feels great shame knowing that she has fallen to the social status of this inferior woman (12). By traveling from Lost Cove into the more sophisticated town, Hannah gains class awareness.

Mobility changes not only how Hannah sees herself, but also how others categorize her. When she begins peddling, Mrs. Wilson exploits Hannah's aristocratic background to sell the girl's wares. Liza tells the buyers that Hannah "ain't peddled befo', an' ain't got no need to come now...She jest come along fur comp'ny, an' bring a few things fur balance – she ain't pertickler 'bout selling'" (14). According to Mrs. Wilson's bargaining tactics, Hannah lacks the desperation that would warrant reducing her goods' prices; as a member of the elite Coveites, she is not a "true" peddler. Ironically, Liza Wilson only notes Hannah's upper-class status to facilitate a business transaction that the heroine desperately needs for economic survival. The true sign of change in Hannah's class status comes when Liza Wilson no longer sees her companion as a real aristocrat, but rather as someone who must feign aristocracy to sell apples. Hannah realizes that she has sunk to a new social low when she imagines people talking about "a Warren gal a-tradin' taters like any trash" (23).

When Hannah ventures to another cove for a family funeral, her movement again reveals a different class status. Prior to this visit, Hannah bears the scandal of trading goods. At the funeral, others observe her inherent grace and beauty associated with an upper-class upbringing. Even Hannah's snobby cousin-in-law, Minerva, "felt herself at a great disadvantage in the presence of this girl from over the mountain" (69). This example of mobility showcases the fluidity of regional class systems that are subject to revision based on one's movement. Although Hannah only travels from one mountain town to the next, the trip is enough to complicate her class identity.

Hannah also regains some of her lost status when people see her traveling back to the Lost Cove with Max, a university urbanite. After they arrive in the Cove, everyone observes how he lifts her off of her horse, a genteel maneuver that is not "the valley custom" (95). After this display, the nosy Liza Wilson thinks that Hannah has become too good for her fellow Coveites. Ironically, this association with Max finally costs Hannah her honor, relegating her to the status of the fallen woman. Although the fallen-woman status might seem more like a social identity than an economic one, it becomes a matter of money when it costs Hannah her job as Agnes's servant.

After Agnes hears about how Max, the object of her affection, supposedly pursued the lower-class Hannah, Agnes feels she has no choice but dismiss her (108). At this point, Hannah's social status becomes lower than a servant--that of a woman with loose morals. Hannah defends her honor by attributing the rumors to Si's jealous lies. However, her grandfather responds: "Lies or no lies, everybody is a-talkin' an' Hannah Warren's name is in the dirt. Thar's no use a-tryin' to hide thet; we must hide you" (110).

In this instance, readers see an interesting reversal between the relationship of social status and mobility. In many cases, Hannah's movement disrupts her class status. In this instance, Hannah's social position disrupts her mobility. Because her status as a fallen woman threatens the family name, her grandparents hide her away within the loft of their cabin (115). When Hannah travels with Max, people's perceptions of her status change; the only way to restore the family's elite reputation is to diminish the mobility that caused this disruption in the first place.

Hannah's movement causes others to revise their perception of her class status, but these revisions go both ways. Hannah also uses her observations about other people's mobility to categorize them within socioeconomic groups. For example, Lost Cove residents look upon Liza Wilson, Hannah's neighbor, as poor and lacking class simply because she peddles goods. She has to labor for her income while paying deference to others--unlike Hannah's family, which is poor but initially self-sustaining. However, although Hannah is reluctant to admit it, Liza occupies a higher class than herself because she has the mobility and knowledge necessary to sell goods in Sewanee. Hannah must swallow her pride and defer to Liza's authority because she "knew the ways at the University and could direct a beginner [peddler]" (4). Liza's negotiation of Sewanee's door-to-door sales market reveals a mobility that corresponds to increased social standing, at least in terms of making money.<sup>x</sup> However, Hannah also knows that class is linked to *how* one earns money and that peddling comes with a lower-class stigma. Thus Mrs. Wilson's occupation renders her simultaneously upper class and lower class.

Another instance in which mobility alters Hannah's perspective of people's class occurs after she travels to Sewanee and meets the university residents. Hannah's grandparents tell her that Sewanee's upper-class residents are "darn fools, a-settin' round with books in their hands" (3). They are a wasteful group that does not know the value of money; they "bought everything and saved nothing...[and] were held throughout the country to be strangely 'lackin'" (3). Although they possess wealth, they occupy a lower social order than the thrifty, conscientious Coveites and are a "little better than 'Naytrals'" (16). According to Hannah's grandparents, the town's residents are so out of touch with their surroundings that they might as well be innocent, primitive, creatures.<sup>xi</sup>

Nonetheless, after Hannah's trip to town, "she had looked into a new world, and her life seemed to have changed" (16). While there, she encounters luxuries that "she had never seen before, the covered floors that made no noise, the books, the curtains, the pictures, all were new to her, at least, in this reckless profusion" (16). At first, these material goods confirm the town's residents as wasteful and opulent, but after chatting with the owners of these luxuries, "all the fear of Sewanee had gone" (21). Instead of seeing the town folks as threatening, Hannah becomes intoxicated with their love of high-quality goods. Her negative perception dissolves when she sees them less as ignorant "Naytrals" and more as educated, refined consumers who value quality.

To further complicate this perception of the upper class, Liza Wilson tells Hannah that although the affluent Sewanee residents have money, they are still suffering from a food shortage like the Coveites. Destabilizing the idea that more populated regions have more economic opportunity, Mrs. Wilson tells Hannah that in Sewanee, "thar ain't much



o' *anything* to eat right now. What with layin' an' scratchin' through the winter fur a livin', the hens is wore out, an' chickens ain't in yit, an' these 'versity women is jest pestered to git sumpen fur the boys" (11). Thus, Hannah's movement to Sewanee shows her (and Elliott's readers) the complicated nature of regional classes. Social status not only changes quickly as people move, but also class awareness alters when mobility allows one to see existing class categories in a new light.

When Sewanee's residents are both wealthy in terms of goods owned and poor in terms of goods desired, the problematic nature of using space to designate class surfaces. Instead of linking specific spaces to class designations, such as assigning upper-class values to Sewanee and a lower-class lifestyle to the Cove, the novel displays mobility as a more accurate indicator of one's social position. In this world of complicated socioeconomic categories, something as simple as moving through a front door reveals class standing. Although Hannah first meets the refined Agnes Welling by peddling, Agnes sees traces of aristocratic refinement in Hannah. After talking with Hannah, she allows her to leave through the front door, an exit that Mrs. Wilson "had declared was sealed to traders" (17). Lizer Wilson tells Hannah about the front door's significance when she says "these fine folks don't ax folks like weuns in the front do'; weuns ain't nothin' but Civites come to peddle" (12). The door is merely an architectural structure, but when people are permitted (or forbidden) to move through it, the site resonates with class privilege. The same door symbolizes Hannah's decline in status when she becomes Agnes's live-in servant. By accepting this position, the heroine knows that "their relations seemed to have changed, and without being told Hannah went out by the back door" (94).

The space (the door) has not changed; rather, Hannah's way of moving has changed, designating a new social status. Thus, Elliott masterfully problematizes using fixed physical spaces to indicate something as unstable as class.

Space becomes an even less reliable socioeconomic indicator when the novel collapses the arbitrary divide between the home and the public market. It also thwarts the notion that regions (as macrocosms of the home) are self-contained in their economies or resistant to outside, larger market systems. Historically, home represents "refuge from the exigencies of the market-world" (Lang 15). However, Elliott's novel rejects this tradition, preferring instead to show the fragility of economic divides based on spatial boundaries. In *The Durket Sperret*, the domestic and the economic first mix when Hannah leaves the Lost Cove to peddle in Sewanee. She journeys physically from her home to earn money, at first reinstating the divide between the home and the market; however, she does so only to take care of her family, a domestic responsibility. When Hannah first arrives with goods to sell at Agnes's house, Max asserts that "she seemed quite at home" (17). Max's observation could mean that Hannah's inherited aristocratic mannerisms facilitate interaction with the upper class. However, it also might mean that Hannah is at "home" selling goods, thus uniting the comfort of the domestic sphere with the unfamiliarity of the market space.

As Karen Kilcup notes, nineteenth-century working-class women saw "'home' as a more tenuous affair, potentially in flux and not necessarily the haven from worldly care that middle-class ideology imagined it" (*Beacon Hill* 3). Certainly, this observation resonates for Hannah who must sell her domestic skills as a live-in servant. For Hannah,

domesticity is a good from which she can profit; her "home" is quite literally within the market when she becomes Agnes's live-in-servant. As with Ramona in Jackson's novel, "home" becomes a mobile construct for Hannah. However, unlike for Ramona, the moveable home bears economic weight. Instead of simply showing adaptability to new living spaces, Hannah uses her domestic prowess to generate income.

Hannah's domestic servitude further troubles economic categories based on space when she retains aristocratic mannerisms despite working outside the home. In the nineteenth century, people defined the middle-class woman by her ability to follow "the sexual division of labor" which meant working at home. Furthermore, according to Cindy Aron, "women who needed to earn wages to help support their families...failed to meet middle-class standards" (180). However, Hannah maintains signs of her prior aristocracy when she recoils at being called a peddler like Lizer Wilson. Even Max observes that the strength and dignity required to be Agnes's servant can only come from a "blood [that] might have been very blue in ages past," granting Hannah the "hereditary right to her simple dignity and beauty" (96).

As Hannah's mobility links the private, domestic sphere with the public market, Elliott's work destabilizes the idea that spaces such as regions (and the home on a smaller level) are self-sufficient. The Warren family initially survives independently of the town by making all their household goods. However, when Hannah's father dies, they must exchange their goods for money to pay field hands; they can no longer rely on their own labor to supply their domestic needs. Just as Hannah cannot live the role that middle-class domestic ideology demanded, the regional space cannot exist independently of larger

economic forces. As regional spaces blend shared economies, readers see the problematic nature of assigning fixed class orders to local spheres. If class systems are all interlinked, flexible, and constantly changing based on human mobility, then a particular region should not bear the weight of a single economic identity.

### **A Challenge to the Critical Neglect of Class in Regionalism**

Rather than assign Elliott's novel to scholarly amnesia, readers and scholars need to acknowledge her refutation of the uniform poverty and unyielding class systems that literary regionalism supposedly assigns to rural spaces. As I noted in the chapters on Jewett and Jackson's works, many nineteenth-century readers saw regionalist writing as a way to preserve communities threatened by the chaos of industrialization, immigration, urbanization, and modernization. As such, the genre developed the reputation of reinforcing strict geopolitical boundaries that maintained a cultural purity threatened by a rapidly diversifying American society. Contemporary critics such as Richard Brodhead affirm this view. Nonetheless, despite this perceived cultural work, Elliott's novel demonstrates that some regionalist writers were actually unsettling the notion of fixed communities.

Regionalism as a genre has suffered from stereotypes that mistakenly position it as void of class conflict, resulting in little scholarly attention to regional class systems (Dainotto 25).<sup>xiii</sup> Critics often fail to see class conflict and class awareness in regionalist texts because they mistakenly assume that rural spaces are universally lower-class, so much so that scholars often call a character "regional" when they really mean "working

class" (Palmer 9). Scholars also fail to see class issues in regionalist literature because they assume that "'regions' solve[ed] class conflicts within their homogeneous organic identity of people and land," contrary to the class conflict portrayed in realistic writing (Dainotto 25).

In *The Social Construction of American Realism*, Amy Kaplan argues that realism exposed a "brutal, class-ridden urban society" (7). Rather than reveal the cruelty of a consumer culture, critics thought regionalist literature upheld a way of life that preceded the collapse of economic boundaries and preserved "regional interests" from the threat of "northern industrialism [and] centralization" (Dike 85). Even though realism and regionalism tried to simulate real life, readers associated realistic novels with rapidly-changing, urban spaces (Kaplan, *Social Construction* 10), while regionalism represented rural spaces' immunity to class conflict. This binary between an urban/industrial/class-conscious realism and a developing/rural/classless regionalism dangerously implied that nineteenth-century local spaces did not experience the class issues plaguing urban areas, nor did they have access to the economic opportunities and social mobility that such industrialization could provide.<sup>xiii</sup>

When readers were not conceptualizing regional communities as homogeneously classless or immune to modern capitalism, they envisioned local communities as sites of conflict between external aristocratic visitors and impoverished locals. According to Stephanie Palmer, travel accidents are a constant motif of nineteenth-century regionalist literature in which the urban traveler has to interact with the rural population as a result of some type of travel mishap (getting lost, modes of transportation breaking down, etc.)

These incidents facilitate a "contact zone" in which wealthy individuals must confront a culture steeped in "small towns, a lack of social hierarchy, [and] hard work" (3).

Conversely, these travel accidents encouraged regional inhabitants to face their fears about the "money, steep class divides, wicked pleasures, and idleness" that outside urbanites embodied (Palmer 3). In many ways, this forced interaction develops a more equitable playing field for the interaction of locals and urbanities, but it does not explore internal class divisions within regions themselves, nor does it allow for poorer individuals to enact mobility.

While these interactions between urban outsiders and regional insiders aptly demonstrate the constructed nature of cultural stereotypes that plague urban and local cultures, they fail to demonstrate how regional characters destabilize fixed class systems through mobility. Unlike many other regionalist texts, Elliott's novel shows that absolute class systems cannot develop when people rarely stay put long enough to solidify economic hierarchies. *The Durket Sperret* asserts that class conflict occurs not just between privileged outsiders and impoverished insiders, but within various populations of regional residents. Thus, one cannot entirely separate the industrialized outside world from the regional space.

As Mark Storey observes, the assumption that regions are isolated from more urban spaces makes spatial identities dangerously simplistic (3). When contemporary scholars look at a region as a detached, organic, cultural entity that exists apart from the larger world, they risk making it the arbitrator of an "authentic" identity, as I explain earlier in chapter three. Furthermore, viewing regions as remote spaces ensures that

scholarship does not "recognize the complex internal processes...and conflicts...which factually connect [regions] with ...wider pressures" (Williams 231). Worse still, alienating regions as distinct cultures reinforces obsession with difference, since many regional communities define themselves by "familiar oppositions between centers and peripheries" (Wagner 2). For Elliott, Appalachia was not a site of economic difference, but a place of socioeconomic ambiguity similar to that of the nation.

Because the complexity of local economies mirrors that of larger national economies, regionalist scholars cannot isolate Appalachian class systems from the rest of the world, nor can the greater society presume to be more economically developed than smaller cultural enclaves.<sup>xiv</sup> Maintaining a unique regional identity is not necessarily negative. However, it starts to become problematic when one asserts difference to claim *superiority* to another region, as the travel motif represents when the superior outsider must interact with the impoverished, backwards local.<sup>xv</sup> Rather than highlight potentially marginalizing differences among regions, Elliott's text emphasizes commonalities that break down cultural borders. These permeable borders ensure Appalachia's unique culture and history while allowing the region to engage economically with other market systems.

Essentially, by complicating the economic boundaries between town and country, urban and provincial, domestic and public, and regional and national, Elliott's novel problematizes critics' assumptions about how the genre perpetuates fixed class systems. In her work, all spaces (whether one views cities and rural communities as separate regions unto themselves or as parts of a larger region) have pliable class systems.<sup>xvi</sup> In a

sense, Elliott's texts remind us that class is broader than regions. Limiting regions to certain class stereotypes or assuming fixed economic hierarchies means disregarding the broad spectrum of classes that regionalist literature actually represents.

### **Looking Backward**

To conclude, I return full circle to the *Harper's* article that depicts an Appalachian complicit with his own poverty and "shiftlessness" (118). Similarly, one of Elliott's contemporary critics from *The Nation* was frustrated with her refusal to perpetuate images of an impoverished Appalachia of uncivilized, lazy moonshiners. The reviewer complains that "the description of the Warren homestead with its 'lobby' and 'piazzas' gives no clear vision of the style of architecture invariably in the Southern mountains. Nor do mottoes from Browning and Omar Khayyám seem the proper prelude for the rustic melodies which follow" (389). This essayist was disappointed that Elliott's novel fails to affirm a pre-existing vision of a lower-class Appalachia that would never have a piazza or cite Browning.

Elliott refused to confirm such essentializing mindsets, even at the risk of alienating readers who expected specific representations of Appalachia. Instead, she highlighted the region's economic diversity. This act positions her amongst other regionalists such as Jewett and Jackson who resist conceptualizing regions as homogenized, authentic, culturally pure spaces. As I argue earlier, the narrator's movement in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* shows the community's permeable geographic borders and the coastal town's diverse members. Elliott similarly unhinges the



notion of cultural homogeneity by showing Appalachia's multiple class structures. A superficial reading of Elliott's work shows Appalachia's purity as a region untainted by industrial interlopers, like the supposedly isolated Dunnet Landing. However, a deeper reading reveals Hannah's adaptation to a community that mirrors many of the nation's class issues. With the region's fragile economic categories, Hannah quickly learns that within the region, there is not equal access to capital or even an all-prevailing definition of wealth.

*The Durket Sperret* does not merely stop at destabilizing demographic homogeneity within regions. When her characters take to the road, they also discover the mobile nature of cultural categories that Helen Hunt Jackson exposes. When Hannah leaves the Lost Cove for Sewanee, she realizes that peddling makes her lower class in the eyes of the town's inhabitants although observers in Sewanee cannot deny traces of Hannah's upper-class heritage. Hannah does not rely on a spatial affiliation to affirm her cultural identity. Instead, her class affiliation becomes a mobile, flexible entity, just as Ramona's ethnic consciousness becomes unfixed in Jackson's novel. As I have argued, Ramona refines her Native American identity with each move that she makes through Southern California and Mexico. Like Jackson, Elliott challenges the notion that regions have fixed cultures and that these cultures must be located in regional spaces to be recognized.

Elliott's emphasis on malleable class structures within regions and the subsequent collapse of regional hierarchies encourages us to revisit class in Jewett and Jackson's texts. Too often, critics associate Jewett's Dunnet Landing with fixed social structures. In

some cases, the novel's community is viewed as a utopian space that resists "power and urban social hierarchies" (Pryse, "Category Crisis" 31; Easton 214-216). Or, based on Jewett's aristocratic background, some critics simply assume that she had little interest in issues of race and class. Marjorie Pryse notes that "for Brodhead and Ammons in particular, Jewett's race and class enroll her in social and cultural categories that render any analysis of her resistance to those categories suspect" ("Category Crisis" 31). If Dunnet Landing is not immune to social hierarchies based on class, it at least earns the reputation of a declining economy with its many "retired or unemployed" residents (Pryse, "Global Capital" 72). From initial observation, it appears that the class structures of Jewett's community are nonexistent due to the town's economic deterioration.

However, Elliott's writing cautions against such simplified conceptions of class in local communities. If readers look closely, they see that "class issues are not marginal, nor something...side-stepped" in Jewett's writing (Easton 209). First, the narrator is a representation of nineteenth-century class divides as "a virtual native of the social world that sponsored nineteenth-century high culture" (Brodhead 174). Unlike the other characters, she has the financial resources to spend the summer writing. She also has the wealth to "command someone else's home as a second home...and does so with a confident exercise of her rights" (Brodhead 146). While the narrator represents the "conspicuous consumption" of Veblen's upper class (*Theory* Ch. 2), Mrs. Todd embodies a more hybridized class position. She is both the owner/gatherer of her capital and the means of production as an herbalist and a landlady. Furthermore, Mrs. Todd has the ability to diversify her economic status. She earns money in many ways: by selling herbs,

counseling her patients in herbal remedies, and taking in lodgers (Pryse, "Category Crisis" 49). Although one does not have a great distance to move within Dunnet Landing's social ladder, social mobility is present--merely in the ability to produce local goods and services. Class distinctions within the community reveal its demographic diversity. In the chapter on Jewett, I focused on diversity stemming from the inhabitants' different experiences with mobility. Having read Elliott's texts, readers can see how Dunnet Landing is also economically diversified.

Lest we think that all women are allowed to move freely in these texts, Elliott's work reminds readers of how American society limits mobility "for those who contended with racial and economic constraints as well as gender oppression" (Rich 3). In short, like *Ramona*, *The Durket Sperret* shows how not every female has the racial and economic privilege to be a New Woman like Jewett's narrator. Similar to *Ramona*, Hannah can move, but she becomes vulnerable to accusations of impurity as she distances herself from the domestic sphere. Just as *Ramona* has to fight off the lascivious advances of Anglo squatters, Hannah must defend herself from allegations about her relationship with Max. As racially and economically marginalized figures, the two women have the double dilemma of not only gaining agency through movement, but of fighting for the respectability that readers naturally attribute to Jewett's wealthy, white narrator.

While Elliott's novel shows that the identity of the political, public, and mobile late nineteenth-century New Woman is unavailable to some marginalized members of society, her text conversely makes the identity more accessible for other Americans. Wendy Parkins observes that most studies of the modern woman's mobility concern cities

and urban spaces (11). However, Hannah is a non-urban career woman, further deconstructing the myth that smaller cultural enclaves are immune to the social movements of the larger nation. By creating a space for the rural New Woman to gain employment outside of her domestic realm, *The Durket Sperret* avoids the limiting binary that associates the city with modernity and rural spaces with established gender roles. Breaking this dichotomy means that Jewett's narrator can maintain her status as the modern female even though she finds belonging in a rural community, and Ramona can embody a modern desire for movement even though she retreats to a secluded mountaintop.

Finally, while many conceptualized the New Woman as a figure of "economic autonomy," who "prioritize[d] intellectual or artistic aspirations over domestic concerns" (Rich 1), Elliott's text reminds readers that nineteenth-century women could merge the domestic and economic realms, as Hannah does when she fights for an equitable marriage and economic independence. This hybridized New Woman encourages readers to reassess any resentment they might hold towards Jewett's narrator for abandoning Mrs. Todd to pursue her writing goals. Instead of seeing a character who only thinks of her career, Elliott's novel suggests that Jewett's narrator can maintain her job as a writer while sustaining the domestic intimacies of her relationship with Mrs. Todd. Additionally, seeing Ramona balance life outside of the Moreno estate with the care of her family adds complexity to a character that many critics have accused of being flat. Thus, while *The Durket Sperret* revises notions of economic fixity in regional areas, it

simultaneously reconstructs the New Woman's identity as a figure that can be urban and rural, domestic and career-minded.

While applying Elliott's novel to *The Country of the Pointed Firs* shows the fallacy of universalizing class orders and gender norms, the application of the novel to Jackson's *Ramona* reinforces the misuse of space to designate social status. In Jackson's novel, initially, specific spaces become synonymous with economies of privilege. For example, the Moreno household is a "handsome estate" complete with a large house, a giant veranda, fruitful land, and even its own chapel (48). However, Ramona's mobility reveals that wealth does not demand geographic fixity. By inheriting her adopted mother's immense collection of precious jewels, Ramona becomes one of the novel's richest characters (although she refuses to draw from such wealth). In juxtaposing Ramona's wealth and mobility, Elliott's work destabilizes the idea that class must be located within geographic boundaries. Such an equation limits the moving figure's ability to belong in multiple classes as well as the ways in which representations of mobility trouble fixed class categories.

While Elliott's text speaks to prior regional works such as Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs* and Jackson's *Ramona*, its promotion of ambiguous identities (for regions and regional inhabitants) also foreshadows later local color works such as Sui Sin Far's *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*. This pattern of characters who use mobility to negotiate complex regional identities begins with Jewett's narrator whose movement reveals Dunnet Landing's diverse population and permeable geographic boundaries. I have also

shown how Ramona assumes a new ethnicity with each relocation. Elliott's text invites us to consider how one can maneuver through space to destabilize class hierarchies.

Sui Sin Far's collection of short stories reveals how movement through local spaces can sustain a multifaceted identity that the U.S. made unavailable at national level. Like Elliott, Sui Sin Far uses her writing to reshape the ideal New Woman, but also acknowledges the limits that racial, ethnic, economic, and gendered hierarchies place on this figure's mobility. Working within these constraints, Sui Sin Far's characters use their mobility to make complex identities legible in an era when anti-Chinese immigration legislation reduced the Chinese identity to that of the foreign Other.

## Notes

<sup>i</sup> I do not use the term "aristocracy" to represent those of "ancient lineage" but rather in the manner that contemporary critics such as Willard B. Gatewood use the phrase to indicate individuals of a privileged economic class or social status. However, it is important to note that the South's social elite would not have called themselves an aristocracy. As Hester Dorsey Richardson notes in a 1906 essay, "the nineteenth-century gentleman was far more interested in the pedigree of his horse or dog than that of his children, and he knew much more about the age of his wine than of his family (761).

<sup>ii</sup> For shorter biographical articles on Elliott, see "Sarah Barnwell Elliott" in *American Authors*, edited by Stanley Kinitz and Howard Haycroft (1938), and "Sarah Barnwell Elliott" in *Southern Writers: A Biographical Dictionary* by Robert M. Willingham Jr. (1979).

<sup>iii</sup> Some reprints of her work do exist including a 1969 collection of her short stories and Dodo Press's restoration of *The Durket Sperret*. Elliott's work is also gaining attention from anthologies such as Karen Kilcup's *Nineteenth-Century American Women Writers: An Anthology*. Digital archives such as the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's *Documenting the American South* also have made her work more accessible.

<sup>iv</sup> Elliott primarily wrote about the South, but has never received credit as a forerunner of the post-bellum Southern regional movement. Although her novel *The Feelmeres* (1879) came out one year prior to George Washington Cable's *The Grandissimes* (1880),

he is often credited with writing the first Southern postwar novel (Mackenzie, *SBE* Preface).

<sup>v</sup>. I do not mean to imply that because class structures are fluid in regional economies, social stratification based on wealth does not exist; it is simply a fluid entity that changes with the characters' movements and other social factors.

<sup>vi</sup>. According to Larry Griffin and Ashley Thompson, Appalachia "may remind America of its own failure, yes, but also its own nobility: a deserving people deserving help, deserving uplift from a generous nation ready always to renew promises" (Griffin and Thompson 327). Thus, Appalachia has long served as America's welfare region, existing only to highlight the larger nation's altruism. Dwight Billings and Kathleen Blee support Griffin and Thompson: "No region of the United States remains more deeply mired in poverty and economic distress than Appalachia. Central Appalachia in particular, as a region of chronic and persistent low income, is virtually synonymous both with rural poverty and with the difficulty of implementing effective policies of social betterment" (Billings and Blee 3). One of the most current perpetuators of these marginalizing beliefs about Appalachia comes from a contemporary play by Robert Schenkkan entitled *The Kentucky Cycle*. This 1992 production ran for six hours, detailing the impoverished lives of intertwined families inhabiting the Cumberland Valley. In an interview, Schenkkan noted that the work witnessed Appalachia's "continual failure to 'socially engineer' meaningful changes" that resulted in "a poverty of spirit; a poverty of the soul" (qtd. in Billings 8-9). Although the play won a Pulitzer Prize in 1992, it



infuriated Appalachian studies scholars for perpetuating stereotypes of economic impoverishment that have long plagued the region (Billings 9).

vii. It is no coincidence that *Harper's Monthly* published both Fox's narrative and Miles's essay from this chapter's introduction. While the periodical published works by other local color writers such as Mary Wilkins Freeman and Constance Fenimore Woolson, it was especially interested in accessing the relatively uncharted territory of Appalachia to satisfy readers' cravings for exotic travel narratives. The magazine even paid for Mississippi writer, Katherine Sherwood Bonner MacDowell, to travel to Tennessee so she could record Appalachian life and imitate the successful writing of Mary Noailles Murfree (Brodhead 119). Other magazines such as the *Atlantic Monthly* and *Century Magazine* were also interested in local color narratives, but as Richard Brodhead observes, these periodicals did not publish regional narratives for the local populations. Ironically, these journals catered to the educated upper classes who had the leisure to read about faraway places (Brodhead 124-125). Affluent readers' consumption of regional literature shows one more way in which regional economies are not separate from the nation's class.

viii. Even though Sewanee, Tennessee was more agrarian than coal-oriented, it is odd that Elliott does not mention Tennessee's coal mines given their presence in the region's economy. One theory is that she avoided talking about the mines because the mining of them promoted more powerlessness than agency in terms of social mobility for lower-class workers. Elliott's writing mainly focuses on how characters change their financial situations through mobility, a situation that might have been less possible given the

restrictive nature of mining towns that “quickly became fiefdoms run by the resident manager or mine manager, using the leverage of the company store...to strengthen the company’s control” (Drake 147). Elliott might not have wanted to document that “by coming to a coal mining town, the miner had exchanged the independence and somewhat precarious self-sufficiency of the family farm for subordination to the coal company and dependence upon a wage income” (Eller xxii).

<sup>ix.</sup> Williams neglects to mention a fourth class of Appalachian residents--African Americans who had especially large populations in the coalfields of northern Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee during the nineteenth century. In central Appalachia (West Virginia, eastern Kentucky, and southwestern Virginia), many mine owners actively hired multiple races because they thought that separate cultural groups would “keep labor more easily controlled and docile” (Drake 143). However, even though African Americans worked beside white Appalachians, they still did not receive equal treatment since many whites “generally accepted the...patterns of racial segregation” established during Reconstruction (Drake 107).

<sup>x.</sup> *The Durket Sperret* does not always equate money with social status. Si Durket, for example, has land and money but lacks social standing due to his violent and dishonest actions. Sewanee's residents, furthermore, do not have unlimited access to goods, as Liza notes (11), but they do have leisure time and the privilege of education. While the book problematizes the direct link between money and social status, such an equation would not have been foreign to Elliott's readers. *The Durket Sperret* entered the literary scene just prior to the proliferation of novels status such as Frank Norris's *McTeague* (1899),

Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (1905), and Theodore Dreiser's *The Financier* (1912) that collapse wealth and social status.

<sup>xi.</sup> While *The Durket Sperret* does not overtly reference the Panic of 1893 that resulted from speculation within the railroad industry, many inhabitants of the Cumberland Mountains would likely have been affected by the high interest rates, rising cost of land, and increased costs in agrarian goods that the depression caused (Storey 19). Such widespread hardship could facilitate the Coveites' critique of the urbanites' reckless spending habits. Based on Elliott's 1891 novel, *Jerry*, which critiques the railroad speculation and stock market scams of the Gilded Age, we know that she was at least interested in the U.S. economic downturn (Mackenzie, "Introduction" x).

<sup>xii.</sup> Even when current critics attempt to counteract myths about the genre's representation of minimal economic opportunity, they often inadvertently reaffirm the region's separation from larger economic systems. For example, Marjorie Pryse counters readers' assumptions that "rural and regional people have neither economic options nor agency or subjectivity" in her study of literary regional economies ("Global Capital" 73). She asserts that contrary to what people expect, women in regional texts perform a wide variety of tasks that allow the community to be economically "self-sustaining" ("Global Capital" 73). While I agree that regionalism facilitates economic opportunity for "unpropertied, disenfranchised, underprivileged, primarily female characters - poor, elderly, homeless, and lower-class women," I disagree that reading regional communities as "self-sustaining" enables agency ("Global Capital" 70). Even though these characters create their own economic opportunity, they are still isolated from larger money-making

systems. By separating literary regions economically, we continue to perpetuate the binary that denies rural communities participation in larger economic systems. Thus, regions get left behind as world economies change, positioning local economies as outdated compared to rapidly-changing industrialized spaces.

<sup>xiii.</sup> Associating realism with an urban class consciousness and regionalism with a rural, classless society is problematic not only because it assumes that regions lack class diversity; this association also assumes that urban spaces are not regions. Just because urban spaces are more populated and industrial, we should not presume that they do not have a communal identity. In the following chapter, I explain how urban spaces such as Chinatown can be vital local spaces for sustaining an individual and communal identity.

<sup>xiv.</sup> It is important to note that Elliott does not use the phrase "Appalachia" in her novel. By using the term, I recognize that I risk hypostatizing the region in a way that the novel resists through its deconstruction of economic boundaries. However, I accept this risk in order to place Elliott's work in the larger trajectory of Appalachian writers that do utilize the terminology. To credit Elliott as a forerunner of Appalachian literature, I must utilize the genre's nomenclature.

<sup>xv.</sup> Dainotto notes that our desire to distinguish regional cultures from each other does not reinforce diversity but rather calls into question the innate desire to "order" cultures. He illustrates the danger of cultural categorization by saying, "the theoretical compulsion to put all cultures, so to speak, in their place *seems* to service the multicultural utopia of a coexistence of different cultures. What this contiguous arrangement of cultures in space actually does, instead, is to bracket away the very question of hegemony – the historical

process whereby one culture acquires authority over all others and puts them 'in order'"(3). In saying that a specific regional culture is entirely separate from other regions, we reinforce the power dynamics of those who arbitrate spatial designations.

<sup>xvi.</sup> Some critics argue that regionalism has not always exhibited this fluidity. Roberto Dainotto observes the genre's supposed complicity with the town/country divide: "region is the rhetorical opposition to the modern city. It is the commonplace of what has never been debased by industry [and] capital" (22 – 23). Dainotto's observations about the town/country divide is not new. As early as 1894 Hamlin Garland observed that "the contrast of city and country, everywhere growing sharper, will find its reflection in this local novel of the immediate future" (*Crumbling Idols* 61). Elliott's texts assert that this divide between regional spaces based on economic stereotypes is not as strong as such critics believe.

## CHAPTER V

### LOCAL MOTION AND THE INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY IN SUI SIN FAR'S *MRS.*

#### *SPRING FRAGRANCE*

In *Mrs. Spring Fragrance's* Preface, Sui Sin Far thanks the editors of magazines "who were kind enough to care for my children when I sent them out into the world, for permitting the dear ones to return to me to be grouped together within this volume" (34). As a world traveler herself, Sui Sin Far likely knew the value of sending one's self (or one's stories) "out into the world." By publishing in multiple places, her materials gained recognition, evolving from personal writing into metaphorical offspring and textual itinerants. From the beginning of Sui Sin Far's collection, a connection develops between global travel and coming-into-being. Sui Sin Far's own peregrinations through multiple countries allowed her to develop as an author who embodied both the East and the West. Conversely, she is grateful that her stories were allowed "to return...to be grouped together" (34). While she recognizes the value of global travel, she also notes the significance of regrouping locally when she happily welcomes her stories back home to the collection. I begin with this quote from her anthology's front matter because it reveals how mobility fosters a multifaceted identity that becomes an integral theme for many of *Mrs. Spring Fragrance's* stories.

Unlike Sui Sin Far and her stories, which had the privilege of moving across geographic borders, many of her characters cannot travel freely due to oppressive immigration laws that prevented their entrance into the U.S. By restricting Chinese immigrants' entrance, America essentially transformed the Chinese into the proverbial Other. If Chinese individuals did enter the United States, society expected them to assimilate into an American way of life. In both instances, early twentieth-century anxieties about Chinese Americans' mobility forced the immigrant population to exist as static, flat characters--either American or foreign, but never anything in between. However, this chapter argues that in *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*, local mobility such as visiting neighbors and walking through the streets helps the characters gain complex identities that reject these "either-or" categories. The characters of Sui Sin Far's collection exhibit multi-faceted subjectivities by distinguishing themselves from superimposed identities and claiming their right to self-definition.

I begin by contextualizing my argument, historicizing turn-of-the-century American sentiment about Chinese immigrants that labeled this population as unassimilable foreigners or as token symbols of the country's power to acculturate the outsider. Then I define subjectivity and identity as they relate to Sui Sin Far's characters. Finally, I articulate the type of mobility these characters enact to develop an individualism that distinguishes the author's work from other turn-of-the-century regionalists who often focused more on communal identities. After providing this framework, I show how the characters' mobility becomes an extension of ethnic privilege when some characters are permitted to move freely while others cannot. I also argue that

despite restricted mobility at the national and international level, Sui Sin Far's characters perform a localized mobility that allows them to develop collective and individual identities that oppose Americans' characteristic labeling of Asian Americans. Their movements manifest the conscious choice to identify with American, Chinese, and multicultural communities or to disconnect from communities they do not find useful. These acts of subjectivity-construction enable the complex identities that many Americans refused to see. Finally, I argue that Sui Sin Far's humanization of her characters not only contradicts early twentieth-century mindsets about the Chinese, but also brings emphasis on the individual to regionalism. To explore Sui Sin Far's depiction of culturally and psychologically complex identities, I focus on the first half of *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*, rather than the children's stories in the second half.<sup>i</sup> The oppressive systems that the characters move through in the collection's initial stories are not the fables or fantasies of children's stories; rather, they depict real instances of impeded mobility that have serious ramifications for the characters and their real-life counterparts.

### **Anxiety about the Chinese Immigrant**

American society not only prevented the Chinese from physically stepping onto its soil, but it also defined "metaphorically, of course, who could or could not qualify for an 'American' identity," since the right to move freely is such an intrinsic part of the national imagination "as a country founded on the mobility of religious groups who settled America" (McCullough 274; Wong 118). Consequently, maintaining exclusivity in a country whose identity depends on mobility necessitated rendering the Other



immobile. Even if American society admitted the outsider, it still had to monitor or control that individual's mobility. As a result of this anxiety about outsiders coming into and moving through the United States, Asian Americans were left out of the supposedly universal narrative of American mobility (Wong 119).

Of course, fear of the foreigner was not directed solely towards the Asian community in the early twentieth century, when "natives pictured the newcomers as dispirited breeders of poverty, crime, and political corruption, and simultaneously as peculiarly powerful subversives whose foreign ideologies were undermining American society" (Wiebe 54). During this time in U.S. history, anxieties about foreign interlopers overrode the egalitarian ideals of Reconstruction, and Americans became more interested in keeping people out rather than creating an inclusive society (R. Smith 346).

In order to designate levels of belonging, four unofficial categories of citizenship developed (R. Smith 429). First, there was the full citizen who had access to all the rights that citizenship entailed, such as voting. America also had a large group of second-class citizens such as women who could not vote. Despite the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment, African Americans were also a part of this citizenry since Jim Crow laws kept many from the voting rights to which they were entitled. Next, as America extended its imperial powers, it developed a third category of citizenship--colonial citizens who inhabited U.S. territories. Finally, the U.S. had a population of noncitizens. These individuals, much like the colonial "citizens," were "too racially distinct, inferior, or troublesome" to earn citizenship. These outsiders who endangered "the moral and physical well-being of established Americans" were not allowed to enter the U.S. or were

subject to deportation (Cresswell 180; R. Smith 429). To keep undesirable noncitizens from entering America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the U.S. government rewrote citizenship laws to allow for the exclusion of immigrations based on "moral, political, and economic concerns" (R. Smith 357). While this legislation meant to eliminate undesirables such as convicts, paupers, and the mentally unsound, it manifested in the exclusion of the "inferior races" such as Chinese and Filipinos (R. Smith 357).

Though apprehension concerning Chinese immigrants reached its height in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Chinese were entering the U.S. as early as the mid-nineteenth-century Gold Rush (Winter 119). Crushed by high taxes from the Quing government, overpopulation, and natural disasters that destroyed crops, thousands of Chinese left their homes for America (Winter 120). Shortly after the Gold Rush, Americans relied on Chinese immigrant labor for the transcontinental railroad's completion. Post-slavery, railroad developers needed new workers and nearly 120,000 Chinese immigrants filled this void (Ling 69).<sup>ii</sup> However, by the mid-1870s Americans began to express unease with the growing Chinese population and pushed for legal action. In March 1875, Congress passed the Page Act which was supposed to address the importation of involuntary servants and prostitutes, but actually limited the number of Chinese women who could enter the United States (Hsu, *Geography* 241). This legislation forced males to create alternative networks of kinship and living arrangements that whites later cited as evidence of "the perversity of Chinese family life" (Hsu, *Geography* 241).

By time that Congress passed the 1882 Exclusion Act, 132,000 Chinese were living in the United States (Winter 121). This legislation suspended their illegal entrance into the U.S. and forbade any state from granting them citizenship (Secs. 1 and 14, 245). Though it permitted merchants, diplomats, teachers, and tourists to enter the United States, these individuals still faced limited immigration rights (Brown 59; Hsu, *Geography* 244). Despite increasing the smuggling of Chinese into the U.S., the act was renewed again in 1892 through the Geary Act and was extended indefinitely in 1902 (Brown 59). Congress did not repeal the act until 1943.

The introduction to the Chinese Exclusion Act declares that "in the opinion of the Government of the United States the coming of Chinese laborers to this country endangers the good order of certain localities." However, it is unclear exactly how this group threatened the "good order" of U.S. society. Many Americans expressed concern about the different lifestyles and cultural values the Chinese would bring to America (Brown 59), but mostly they feared the possibility of lower wages, since many Chinese immigrants worked in laundries, restaurants, farms, and as domestic servants for less money than whites (Hsu, Introduction 15). Members of the Workingmen's Party in California, especially party president Dennis Kearney, convinced Congress to pass anti-Chinese immigration legislation supposedly in order to protect their jobs (Hsu, Introduction 16). However, far more than jobs was at stake in excluding the Chinese; Kearney and others felt that this group threatened American values. It is worth quoting at length Kearney's 1878 speech, "Appeal from California: The Chinese Invasion," to

understand this fear. This speech also shows the stereotypes that Sui Sin Far's writing had to dismantle. Kearney states:

To add to our misery and despair, a bloated aristocracy...rakes the slums of Asia to find the meanest slave on earth--the Chinese coolie--and imports him here to meet the free American in the Labor market...still further to degrade white Labor...These cheap slaves fill every place. Their dress is scant and cheap. Their food is rice from China. They hedge twenty in a room, ten by ten. They are whipped curs, abject in docility, mean, contemptible and obedient in all things. They have no wives, children, or dependents. (244)

Persuaded by Kearney's anti-Chinese speeches, mobs along the west coast drove the Chinese out of their towns, forcing them to retreat to the safety of "separate cultural communities" known as Chinatowns (Ling 70). Although imprisoning, these towns were paradoxically sources of a localized mobility that enabled multifaceted identities for those who moved through these tiny communities. However, before seeing how these local communities such as Chinatowns facilitated individual identities denied at the national level, we must establish a working definition of the subjectivity that Sui Sin Far's characters make legible.

In claiming an individual identity for Sui Sin Far's characters, I mean that they demonstrate the capacity to distinguish themselves from the "ascribed, inherited and inborn determination of his or her social character" (Bauman 474). A sense of self is not just about what composes individual subjectivity--but also about what does not (Merino and Tilega 88). In the case of Sui Sin Far's characters, articulating an identity means refusing a superimposed selfhood. Although the stories' characters assert their right to live independently of social categories, they do not reject collective identities entirely.

After all, "interiority is an imaging of closeness and the making of relationships" as well as disassociating with specific groups (McCarthy 114). This selfhood simply means that they have the right to choose with whom to identify. As I address later, *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* brings high regionalism into a modernist realm that privileges the "obligatory self-determination" over a previous emphasis on the external "*determination* of social standing" (Bauman 475).

Based on the cosmopolitan authorial persona that Sui Sin Far generates through her world travels, we might easily presume that international mobility enables an interiority that defies cultural boundaries. However, Sui Sin Far's characters remind us that not everyone has access to international travel and thus must develop other ways to distinguish the self from limiting social categories. *Mrs. Spring Fragrance's* characters accomplish the latter through small-scale movement which I call "localmotion." This movement generates what Susan Stanford Friedman calls a "situational approach to identity" (23). Friedman defines a situational identity as one that "resists fixity," and "shifts fluidly from setting to setting...[in which] each situation presumes a certain setting as a site for the interplay of different axes of power and powerlessness" (23). A situational identity means that to constitute selfhood characters do not have to rely on the act of international migration and the citizenship that such movement entails. Rather, they can gain subjectivity through everyday mobility.

However, unlike a situational identity that relies on more generalized movement, localmotion specifically uses the characters' mobility through communal spaces outside of the nation-state discourse to validate a sense of self. A situational identity also assumes

an identity drawn from hybridity in which the self is always divided between multiple groups, while localmotion allows for affiliation with a single cultural entity. Finally, localmotion plays on "locomotion," meaning movement through place. Unlike a situational identity that emphasizes one's position in space, localmotion signifies the act of continually resituating one's self, in terms of both location and self-definition. Sui Sin Far's characters perform this act every time they use movement to defy cultural stereotypes and totalizing assignments. Ultimately, by identifying how localmotion sustains the characters' subjectivities, we can better understand why Carol Roh-Spaulding calls Sui Sin Far "a champion of the displaced" (158).

Like her characters, Sui Sin Far made displacement a positive signifier of an identity that moved beyond the reductive social groups that Americans assigned to the Chinese. Sui Sin Far's autobiographical writing indicates that from a young age, she used mobility to generate internal peace. In "Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian," she notes how solitary wandering provided solace. She writes, "the others will despise me for not being as strong as they. Therefore, I like to wander away alone, either by the river or in a bush. The green fields and flowing water have a charm for me. At the age of seven, as it is today, a bird on the wing is my emblem of happiness" ("Leaves" 221). Because of her poor health, the young Sui Sin Far felt like an outsider in her own family and sought happiness by exploring rivers, bushes, and green fields. The symbol of well-being for her is "a bird on the wing," a representation of unrestricted movement that permits her to exist in an alienating world.

As a youth, Sui Sin Far remembers seeing Chinese laundry shop workers while on a walk with her brother. She describes the laborers as "uncouth specimens of their race, drest in working blouses and pantaloons with queues hanging down their backs" ("Leaves" 219). She is shocked by the image of Chinese culture these men represent ("Leaves" 219). The mobility that takes her past this store allows her to encounter and separate herself culturally from these entities. Like her characters, Sui Sin Far defines herself by what she is not—in this case, the Chinese workers. Nonetheless, as an adult, Sui Sin Far says that moving through Chinatown helped her "Chinese instincts develop":

I am no longer the little girl who shrunk against my brother at the first sight of a Chinaman. Many and many a time, when alone in a strange place, has the appearance of even a humble laundryman given me a sense of protection and made me feel quite at home. This fact of itself proves to me that prejudice can be eradicated by association. ("Leaves" 227)

As she grows more comfortable traveling through the Chinese community, the formerly haunting image of a Chinese laundryman now provides a sense of cultural affiliation. Sui Sin Far's local motion develops a cultural "home" for her. The same process occurs in Jamaica when she identifies with marginalized races of a darker skin color, allowing her to "break through her loneliness and isolation to perceive an affinity with them" (White-Parks 36). Her sense of self-awareness changes depending on with whom she affiliates and how she maneuvers through space. We must remember, nevertheless, that as someone who appeared white, Sui Sin Far moved within a place of opportunity that many of her characters cannot occupy.

## **The Privilege to Move**

Unlike her characters who rely on local motion to create polymorphous identities, Sui Sin Far's white appearance allowed her to cross international boundaries and subsequently transgress racial and ethnic categories (McCullough 250). As a writer who lived in England, Montreal, Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, and Jamaica, Sui Sin Far transcended the need for home, developing instead "a transnational consciousness" and a "cosmopolitan sensibility" (Peterson and Wendland 165; Hsu, Introduction 13). According to the author's letters, she crossed the U.S./Canadian border frequently, despite the passage of the 1892 Geary Act that made it illegal for a person of Chinese descent to enter the United States (White-Parks 102). Her white appearance also allowed her to travel as a reporter to Jamaica, where officials segregated people of color (including Eurasians) from whites (White-Parks 33). Sui Sin Far herself affirms these critical readings of her mobility, saying in "Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of a Eurasian" that "I roam backward and forward across the continent. When I am East, my heart is West. When I am West, my heart is East. Before long, I hope to be in China" (230). Wherever Sui Sin Far resides, her sense of self transcends identity-limiting boundaries.

Many scholars have investigated why Sui Sin Far advocated so passionately for the Chinese and then used her mixed-race status to pass as white (Hsu, Introduction 13).<sup>iii</sup> Biographer Annette White-Parks suggests that the author did not pass for social acceptance, but rather for "survival at a primary level," given the prevailing anti-Chinese sentiments (33). Whatever Sui Sin Far's motivations, it is ironic that she had to be white



to experience a culturally-mixed, cosmopolitan identity. For example, the writer used her white status to travel to Jamaica, where she ultimately identified with the island's African descendants noting that “occasionally an Englishman will warn me against the ‘brown boys’ of the island, little dreaming that I too am of the ‘brown people’ of the earth” (“Leaves” 225). Even while relying on her Anglo appearance to travel, Sui Sin Far used the experiences to understand other marginalized populations. This empathy explains why someone who could have passed for white instead used her writing to protest stereotypes about the Chinese people (Hsu, Introduction 9).

While most of the characters in *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* have difficulty crossing international borders, a few move globally with the same ease as Sui Sin Far due to their racial and/or economic privilege. These characters highlight how America regulated its society by controlling its inhabitants' mobility. Unlike the undesirable immigrants who threaten America's cultural purity, characters such as Mrs. Spring Fragrance who embrace aspects of U.S. culture are ironically permitted to develop a complex multicultural identity. As the wife of a successful merchant invested in the American ideal of capitalism, Mrs. Spring Fragrance enters the country and also moves freely along the West Coast, being invited “everywhere that the wife of an honorable Chinese merchant could go” (38). Her travels take her to San Francisco where she participates in American lectures and fudge-making as well as the Chinese Fifth Moon festival. These activities show her ability to navigate between cultural worlds.

While Mrs. Spring Fragrance's mobility stems from economic privilege, Jack Fabian's mobility as a smuggler in "The Smuggling of Tie Coe" comes from racial

privilege. Because he is white with “fine features and a pair of keen, steady blue eyes,” he represents the dominant class (132). Fabian does not even smuggle for money, but rather for the “certain pleasure to be derived from getting ahead of the government” (132). For Fabian, border crossing is a game, while for Tie Co who drowns herself to avoid incriminating her beloved smuggler, it is a matter of life and death.

Tian Shan, a Chinese border-crosser in “Tian Shan’s Kindred Spirit” provides a textual counterpart to Fabian’s mobility. Like Fabian, Tian Shan makes a living by illegally traveling from the U.S. to Canada. However, Tian Shan’s Chinese lineage means that Americans see his mobility as transgressive rather than brave:

Had Tian Shan been an American and China to him a forbidden country, his daring exploits and thrilling adventures would have furnished inspiration for many a newspaper and magazine article, novel and short story... Being, however, a Chinese, and the forbidden country America, he was simply recorded by the American press as a wily Oriental, who “by ways that are dark and tricks that are vain,” is eluding the vigilance of our brave customs officers. (153)

Sui Sin Far takes the phrase about the Chinese’s “dark” “tricks,” from Bret Harte’s “Plain Language from Truthful James.” This textual repurposing not only highlights the prominent stereotypes about the Chinese that her privileged, white readers would have recognized, but also mobility’s connection to race. Rather than herald Tian Shan as heroic (like Fabian), the American press views him as deviant. By contrasting Fabian and Tian Shan, Sui Sin Far exposes the inherent racism of U.S.’s early twentieth-century border policies. Her stories critique a government that, by confining the Chinese to specific geographic spaces, ultimately confined them to the category of foreign Other.

### **The Immobilized Character in *Mrs. Spring Fragrance***

While my previous chapters focus on how characters establish agency by maneuvering through space, Sui Sin Far's texts show the other side of mobility – the effects of imprisonment and restricted movement. By showing the correlation between mobility's humanizing potential and the denial of humanity that occurs when individuals are rendered immobile, her texts help to reframe works by Jewett, Jackson, and Elliott. From the first story in Sui Sin Far's collection, we see Mrs. Spring Fragrance who travels all over the west coast; however, within the text's darker recesses, the uglier side of mobility appears through the incarceration of Mr. Spring Fragrance's brother. Mrs. Spring Fragrance writes to her husband, advising him, "and murmur no more because your honored elder brother, on a visit to this country, is detained under the roof-tree of this great Government instead of under your own humble roof. Console him with the reflection that he is protected under the wing of the Eagle, the Emblem of Liberty" (40). Ironically, Mrs. Spring Fragrance writes letters that celebrate her travel, but within these happy missives lay an underlying fear of imprisonment. Sui Sin Far's language resonates with in speaking about detainment within a country that believes itself to be the "Emblem of Liberty." While America might conceptualize its identity through narratives of liberated mobility, Sui Sin Far's story underscores that this freedom of movement is not universal. Even though the author illustrates the joys of movement, she also reveals America's unspoken back-story of immobility.

Within the story "In the Land of the Free," Lae Choo's little boy experiences a situation similar to Mr. Spring Fragrance's brother. Upon approaching America Lae Choo

says, "see, Little One--the hills in the morning sun. There is thy home for years to come. It is very beautiful and thou wilt be very happy there" (120). In contrast to Lae Choo's vision of a happy family who can choose their home in the hills, her husband cannot even board the ship to see his kin. Hom Hing, Lae Choo's husband, "had been waiting on the wharf for an hour and was detained that much longer by men with the initials U.S.C. on their caps, before he could board the steamer and welcome his wife and child" (121).

After arriving, customs officials will not permit Lae Choo to bring her child into the U.S. because he lacks the proper documentation. Lae Choo points out that they could not file paperwork for the child since he was still unborn when she left for China. Overriding common sense in favor of legal red-tape, the officials refuse to let Lae Choo's son enter without further documentation (122). Like Lae Choo, Hom Hing also thinks that the U.S. would not detain its residents, least of all in ways that would separate a family (123). He believes that he should have all the rights of American citizens: to make his living as a merchant in San Francisco, to maintain cultural and familial connections with China, and to cross international borders freely. However, Hom Hing eventually realizes his status as non-citizen when he cannot get his son out of the detention center.

As with many of *Mrs. Spring Fragrance's* characters, Little One's limited mobility manifests a larger national desire to prevent foreigners from bringing non-American children, as well as alien beliefs and values into the country. The U.S. ultimately forces Little One to become culturally white by keeping him with Anglo caretakers for over five months while "the great Government at Washington still delayed sending the answer which would return him to his parents" (125). Little One has become so assimilated that

by the time his parents finally can retrieve him, he no longer recognizes them, telling them to “go 'way!” (129). Once Little One becomes culturally white and effectively an American, he is a citizen; still, as long as he exists between two worlds, officials must keep him imprisoned. The title “In the Land of the Free” becomes an obvious critique of a country that only permits free movement to those who belong to its dominant culture.

In Sui Sin Far’s collection, the stories grow progressively darker as impeded mobility becomes more visible. The family within “In the Land of the Free” is at least reunited, although we can extrapolate the emotional damage the mother suffers from her child's rejection. In “The Smuggling of Tie Co” in which the heroine drowns herself rather than risk trouble for a smuggler, there is little ambiguity about the ending’s tone. Instead of permitting Tie Co to pursue a biracial relationship that would ultimately undermine the U.S.’s desire for cultural purity, Sui Sin Far’s story shows that such a character cannot survive in a country that views outsiders as a threat to the dominant order (Roh-Spaulding 167). Carol Roh-Spaulding observes, “posing as a boy, Tie Co enjoys a certain degree of mobility as the companion of Jack Fabian, but her crossing of national, gender, and racial boundaries in her love for a white man reveals that the border is a dangerous...place to be” (167). While Roh-Spaulding speaks of Tie Co as a character who crosses identity boundaries, we also need to acknowledge that crossing *physical* boundaries such as international borders is equally dangerous for characters that resist early twentieth-century America’s penchant for cultural homogeneity.

Even though the U.S. controlled ethnic minorities' mobility to maintain racial hierarchies, these regulations also fostered gender and class hierarchies. In *Mrs. Spring*

*Fragrance*, gender and racial oppression collide when Ti Co in “The Smuggling of Tie Co” and Fin Fan in “Tian Shan’s Kindred Spirit” have to alter their genders to enter the U.S.. Kate McCullough argues that “gender passing replaces racial passing as a strategy for the Chinese heroine’s crossing the U.S. border” (247). Although McCullough views gender bending as transgressive, the act also critiques gender restrictions that result from America's sinophobia. These characters have to disguise their status as women because the United States refuses the entrance of individuals that could strengthen the Chinese community's development.

*Mrs. Spring Fragrance* repeatedly asserts that movement is especially problematic for Chinese women. Many of Sui Sin Far’s female characters join husbands already established in the United States. They face both the difficult task of adjusting to a new country, language, and culture as well as of finding a place for themselves in their husbands’ worlds. In “The Wisdom of the New,” Pau Lin looks forward to seeing her husband when she first arrives in the U.S. However, after she sees him next to an American woman, “the eager look of expectancy which had crossed her own face faded away, her eyelids drooped, and her countenance assumed an almost sullen expression” (65). She immediately realizes that rather than structure her identity as Wou Sankwei’s wife, she must instead define herself in relation to the American woman, the lovely Adah Carlton. Even before interacting with him she senses that she will become “more of an accessory than a part of his life” (65).<sup>iv</sup>

Aside from dealing with restrictive immigration policies that forced them to come after their husbands' arrival, *Mrs. Spring Fragrance's* female characters also contend with

more general mobility limits resulting from a patriarchal society. In “The Prize China Baby,” Fin Fan is imprisoned as a worker in her husband Chung Kee’s factory. He never permits her to leave and does not like Fin Fan’s baby because the child takes her away from work. One day, Fin Fan enters her child in a baby beauty contest, thinking that its good looks might justify its importance to her husband (149). The plot takes an ironic twist when Fin Fan runs home after the contest. Distracted by fear of her husband, she is unable to avoid a street car accident that takes her baby’s life (150). Thus, even though she exercises agency as a mother, she cannot escape a patriarchal world that restricts Chinese women’s mobility. Just as Ramona in Jackson’s novel leaves home to fulfill her domestic desires of raising a family and Hannah Warren moves to Sewanee in *The Durket Sperret* to provide for her grandparents, Fin Fan also has to leave the domestic sphere in hopes that winning a contest will justify her maternal calling. However, while Jackson and Elliott’s texts show the possibility of a mobile domesticity, Sui Sin Far’s demonstrate the intense gender power dynamics that limit many Chinese women’s access to movement, even to perform traditionally female roles such as child-rearing.

“The Americanizing of Pau Tsu” provides another example of how gender shapes a character’s right to maneuver through space and thus her cultural identity. Lin Fo, a successful and Americanized merchant, brings his wife, Pau Tsu, from China to the United States. Unlike in “The Prize China Baby,” in which the husband restricts his wife’s movement, Lin Fo nearly forces his wife to become mobile, leaving the comfort of her Chinese home for the unknown American streets. When Lin Fo tells his wife that she must learn English, she protests: “it may be best for a man who goes out in the street...to

learn the new language, but of what importance is it to a woman who lives only within the house and her husband's heart?" (114). Pau Tsu associates mobility with masculinity and the new language of an American identity. Lin Fo continues to force assimilation when he buys his wife "a beautiful lace evening dress and dark blue walking costume, both made in American style," telling her that "I wish you to dress like an American woman when we go out or receive....It is the proper thing in America to do as the Americans do" (115). This story reveals that Sui Sin Far's female characters are not always restricted to the domestic sphere; sometimes, patriarchal systems force women to abandon their domestic identities and become mobile. Whether women are required to leave the home or confined to it, both forms of controlled mobility affect the characters' self-definition. In "The Prize China Baby," Fin Fan cannot justify motherhood because her husband will not let her take her baby to a beauty contest. In "The Americanizing of Pau Tsu," Pau Tsu cannot define herself as a domestic Chinese wife when her husband demands that she become the mobile American woman.

In addition to highlighting the impediments that gender offers to mobility, Sui Sin Far's stories also illustrate how class differences authorize and prevent movement. Although Annette White-Parks argues in her biography of Sui Sin Far that wealthy Chinese women usually lived in seclusion above their husbands' shops while working class women moved freely, *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* presents a different picture of how class shapes mobility (110).<sup>v</sup> In "The Prize China Baby," Fin Fan cannot leave home because of her husband's control, but also because of her class. She was sold to her husband as a servant-wife and thus, must follow his orders. In contrast, Sui Sin Far, as the



wife of a successful merchant, can travel to see friends, to attend lectures, even to celebrate holidays in other cities.<sup>vi</sup> Similarly, Lae Choo and Hom Hing of “In the Land of the Free” are not wealthy (Lae Choo has to pawn her jewelry for legal aid), but they still have the limited means to pay a lawyer to fight for their child. We can extrapolate how much worse the situation would have been had they not possessed their limited access to funds.

Sui Sin Far's stories illustrate how turn-of-the-century American society limited Chinese Americans' mobility, especially the mobility of Chinese American women and lower-class individuals. Through the regulation of Chinese people's movement, America showed its rejection of those who threatened the racial order (as we see through Tie Co's demise in "The Smuggling of Tie Co"). If Chinese immigrants did want to enter the U.S., they had to acculturate themselves to the white, Anglo Saxon majority. Thus, Chinese immigrants had two options: assimilate or be dehumanized as subalterns who ostensibly threatened social stability. The movement of Sui Sin Far's characters rejects such limiting categories, creating a cultural, racial, economic, and gendered diversity that defies simple labels. As in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* and *The Durket Sperret*, the characters' peregrinations reveal a diverse regional community. However, more than in the other texts, when the stereotypes about cultural homogeneity collapse in Sui Sin Far's stories, a space suddenly opens for the characters' individual identities to develop.

### **Employing Localmotion to Resist Chinese American Stereotypes**

While I believe the localized mobility that Sui Sin Far's characters exhibit is far more liberating than oppressive, relying on small-scale movement to counter mobility denied at the national level is problematic. At the most basic level, this could mean disregarding the unjust manner in which the Chinese were relegated to Chinatowns. We cannot forget that these communities arose because Americans drove Chinese people from more rural spaces and deemed them unfit for U.S. society. In analyzing local mobility, we have to be careful not ghettoize Chinese culture. Nonetheless, as in Jackson's *Ramona*, even oppressive situations provide opportunities for resistance. Ramona has to leave Native lands or suffer the consequences of Anglo interlopers, yet she controls when and how she moves. Similarly, many Chinese had to move to Chinatowns; however, within these communities, the Chinese used their movement to create locally-situated identities that ultimately refuse racially-charged, superimposed stereotypes.

Phillip Barrish asserts that Sui Sin Far's writing "employs several different strategies to undercut exotic fantasies of Chinese otherness as well as more crudely racist forms of dehumanization" (182). I argue that she deconstructs stereotypes through representations of the characters' mobility. Rather than depict the Chinese as unassimilable, the characters' movements show openness to American culture. In "The Gift of Little Me," a Christian teacher tells her Chinatown students about the birth of Christ. When Little Me does not have a New Year's present for his teacher, he kidnaps his own brother and carries him to the teacher just as God gave his only son to the world.

Little Me's interpretation of the first Christmas is comical, but on a deeper level, it reveals moments when Chinese characters experiment with cultural multiplicity. Rather than remain unassimilable, Little Me is influenced so much by the teacher's narrative that he gives away his own brother. Still, the story does not advocate for the complete acceptance of American culture. Little Me gives his gift for the Chinese New Year rather than the Anglo Christmas holiday, sharing his own culture (and his brother) with the teacher. Lest we assume that twentieth-century Chinese immigrants always desired assimilation, Sui Sin Far also offers the story of "Tian Shan's Kindred Spirit." Tian Shan does not cross the Canada/U.S. border to assimilate into the United States; he does so to raise enough money to "have a wife and a home" (155). Instead of the need to assimilate, Tian Shan's desire to have a family drives his mobility.

In other stories, Sui Sin Far reverses the assimilationist discourse by showing how whites moved into the Chinese communities. In "The Inferior Woman," Mrs. Spring Fragrance's neighbor, Mrs. Carman, relies on her previous mobility to shape her conception of Chinese people. According to the narrator, Mrs. Carman, "having lived in China while her late husband was in the customs service there," has "prejudices [that] did not extend to the Chinese, and ever since the Spring Fragrances had become the occupants of the villa beside the Carmans, there had been social good feeling between the American and Chinese families" (57).

While Mrs. Carman relies on her travels outside of the U.S. to empathize with the Spring Fragrances, Adah Charlton in "The Wisdom of the New" gains compassion for the Chinese characters by visiting Chinatown. During the Harvest Moon Festival, Adah hears

a translation of an apotheosis that a priest gives to the moon; after hearing the prayer's dual emphasis on practicality and imagination, Adah better understands Wou Sankwei, her Chinese friend (75). The prayer teaches Adah the Chinese culture's reliance on duality, and she worries that Wou Sankwei has abandoned this ideal to an American totality that dishonors his wife's traditional ways. Adah then tells him, "you are becoming too Americanized," reminding him that his wife "has done for you what no American woman would do--came to you to be your wife, love you and serve you without even knowing you--took you on trust altogether" (77). By hearing the prayer on her walk through Chinatown, Adah understands the damaging nature of Wou Sankwei's beliefs and what his wife must be suffering. Mobility allows the whites to join the Chinese community as allies.

Mrs. Carman and Adah Charlton empathize with the Chinese people, but remain distinctly American in identity. Conversely, *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* presents some characters such as Miss McLeod in "The Gift of Little Me," who identify completely with the Chinese culture. Even though she is Scottish, Miss McLeod uses local motion to gain acceptance within the Chinese community. Unlike the other missionary teachers, "she had taken pains to learn the Chinese language before attempting to teach her own...[and] she lived in Chinatown, and made herself at home amongst its denizens" (89). Miss McLeod demonstrates a comfortable mobility that lets her interact with the town's residents, as we see when she travels the streets to give families red envelopes for the Chinese New Year.

When Miss McLeod organizes the search party for a lost child, she reveals an ethos that allows her to coordinate other residents' mobility. After her proposal for search parties, "there was an assenting babble of voices, followed by a darting into passages, up stairways, and behind doors" showing the respect other members had for her (89). Miss McLeod further confirms her affiliation with the Chinese community when she continues searching for Little Me's brother after "not a single white person, not even a policeman, had been impressed into the search" (90). Thus, by traveling comfortably in the community, coordinating the movement of residents, and moving with them in solidarity, Miss McLeod affirms her affinity for a culture that accepts her when her own Scottish culture would not.

At the story's end, mobility and movement become a metaphor for Miss McLeod's cultural belonging. The narrator tells of a ship that "had borne up her soul above the stormy flood, and helped her to launch another ship in a sea both wild and strange...It carried her Chinese work--the work in which she had found consolation, peace, and happiness" (91). The ship carries Miss McLeod's soul to a more welcoming community. This significant metaphor illustrates how movement enables belonging in a cultural group. Aside from developing an individualized connection with the Chinese community for Miss McLeod, this short story emphasizes mobility's refutation of myths about the Chinese community's exclusivity. As with Jewett's unnamed narrator who gains membership in Dunnet Landing by traveling with its members, this text shows that outsiders can belong in a community, provided the strangers learn how to move with its inhabitants.

While Mark Carson in "Its Wavering Image" does not join the Chinese in solidarity like Miss McLeod, he does gain more insight into Pan's world when she leads him through Chinatown:

[she initiates] him into the simple mystery and history of many things, for which, she being of her father's race, had a tender regard and pride. For her sake he was received as a brother by the yellow-robed priest in the joss house, the Astrologer of Prospect Place, and other conservative Chinese. The Water Lily Club opened its doors to him when she knocked, and the Sublimely Pure Brothers' organization admitted him as one of its honorary members....With her by his side, he was welcomed wherever he went. (82)

Because he moves through the community like Pan, they accept him as one of their own. Likewise, she starts to feel more comfortable with whites after going on walks with Carson; when he asks her whether she would rather have a white or Chinese husband, she "for the first time since he had known her, had no answer for him" (82). Her hesitancy shows that she is considering a cross-racial relationship, refuting the notion that whites and Chinese have nothing in common. While the ultimate theme of the story is betrayal, the community embraces Carson until his treason. Instead of a community isolated from Anglo culture, the Chinese accept various races.

Sui Sin Far further de-exoticizes the Chinese by showing their participation in the same class divisions as whites. Similar to Sarah Barnwell Elliott's use of mobility to reveal the multiple classes of Appalachia, Sui Sin Far uses her characters' spatial maneuverings to illustrate Chinatown's class stratifications. With its economic diversity, readers see the characters as more than recipients of "low-paying, laboring jobs" in "ethnic businesses" such as "gardening, restaurants and laundries" (Maxwell 16). In a

1903 article for the *Los Angeles Express* entitled "Chinese in Business Here," Sui Sin Far describes the many types of labor that make up Chinatown's multiple classes. Aside from the merchants, she notes "there are medicine venders, who comprise with their business fortune telling, undertakers, barbers, cobblers, tinkers, vegetable venders, and last but by no means the least, the laundry man" (208).

Her non-fiction description of Chinatown's multiple laborers becomes fiction in "The Wisdom of the New," when Pau Lin observes the different classes who maneuver through Chinatown:

[she saw] a motley throng made up of all nationalities. The sing-song voices of girls whom respectable merchants' wives shudder to name...a fat barber was laughing hilariously at a drunken white man who had fallen into a gutter... a stalwart Chief of the Six Companies engaged in earnest confab with a yellow-robed priest from the Joss house. A Chinese dressed in the latest American style and a very blonde woman, laughing immoderately, were entering a Chinese restaurant together. (68)

Pau Lin's observations reveal not only multiple races, but also multiple classes. She sees middle-class merchants' wives, a lower-class barber who laughs at a drunken man, and religious officials. The street population consists of immigrants who have achieved great success and social esteem, as well as poorer members of the working class. Pau Lin observes on a Chinatown street a microcosm of the populations in *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*--successful merchants such as Wou Sankwei in "The Wisdom of the New" and Mr. Spring Fragrance, but also characters who live in extreme poverty such as "actresses (probably prostitutes), laundrymen, slaves, families struggling to pay huge debts, and men struggling to purchase the freedom of their lovers" (Roh-Spaulding 162).

More than simply illustrate class diversity, Sui Sin Far humanizes the members of different classes. In "Lin John," Sui Sin Far depicts Lin John's struggle to raise enough money to send his sister back to China, allowing her to become an "honest woman" (151). Instead of laboring for wealth and power, he works to restore his sister's good name that she lost in America. Thus, we see a level of humanity behind the seemingly mechanical acts of lower-class labor the Chinese perform. Like Sarah Barnwell Elliott, Sui Sin Far complicates class fixity by showing interclass camaraderie. The subtle friendships between classes rarely fuel the story's main plot, but still exist. When Pau Tsu runs away from her husband in "The Americanizing of Pau Tsu," he finds her only because he recognizes a young boy playing with the beads that his wife gave to her servant. After seeing the necklace, he quickly realizes that his wife's servant was an accomplice who helped Pau Tsu escape (120).

When Pau Tsu runs away with her maid, their excursion also implies the unification of women as a marginalized gender. Gender in *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* becomes an important tool for challenging totalizing conceptions of the Chinese community. Sui Sin Far wrote during a historical era when Americans stereotyped Chinatowns as containment areas for bachelors because the Page Act made it difficult for Chinese women to immigrate (Ammons, *Conflicting* 109). At the end of the nineteenth century, only five percent of the Chinese in California were women (Ammons, *Conflicting* 109). However, Sui Sin Far's stories show the presence of women and children in Chinatowns. Through female heroines, she ensures that Chinese women "emerge from the shadows and demand visibility" as moving entities (White-Parks 131).



Many of Sui Sin Far's female characters use mobility to "take a voice in their destinies, break the stereotypes of Chinese and Chinese American women as victims, ... [and] transcend the oppressiveness of their circumstances" (White-Parks 132). In "The Americanizing of Pau Tsu," the protagonist leaves her home, threatening her husband with divorce if he does not allow her to participate in her Chinese culture. In "Tian Shan's Kindred Spirit," Fin Fan, leaves Canada dressed as a male character to pursue her beloved. Finally, "The Smuggling of Tie Co" reveals a young girl who also dresses as a man to follow a border-crosser into the United States. Each woman affirms the diverse gendered composition of Chinese American communities and asserts her agency, similar to protagonists in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, *Ramona*, and *The Durket Sperret*.

Molly Winter highlights Sui Sin Far's emphasis on gender:

Sui Sin Far carefully delineates the many areas in which a woman should be free to determine her own destiny. Sometimes that choice flows directly from the mainstream ideal of the liberated woman: not only should a woman be free to work and be financially independent, but she should also be able to earn her own living without being judged as unfeminine... [However,] if a woman is more comfortable as a wife and mother...then she should not be forced to work, and she should not be shamed by her decision. (137)

Sui Sin Far's female characters who embody multiple conceptions of class and womanhood destabilize totalizing stereotypes of Chinese women. Furthermore, they correct assumptions about Chinatown's so-called bachelor communities.

Sui Sin Far also refutes stereotypes about Chinatown's male-centered community by including children in her stories. Her young characters may be peripheral, but their presence still highlights the cultural, ethnic, and racial conflicts that adult characters

experience. Children appear in "The Gift of Little Me," "In the Land of the Free," "The Story of One White Woman Who Married a Chinese" and even in "Its Wavering Image" (86). Sui Sin Far shows that, despite the tendency to essentialize Chinese as foreigners, Chinatown has a complex network of families and kinship, just like any Anglo-American community.

In many of her texts *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* encourages its readers to reassess homogenizing conceptions of the Chinese community as alien, exotic, working-class bachelors. Rather than reaffirm these images that justified exclusion, Sui Sin Far's characters move to sustain complex identities in a country that reduced the Chinese identity to the unassimilable Other. Mrs. Spring Fragrance articulates an American sense of self when she makes American fudge and listens to lectures. Characters also use movement to integrate American and Chinese identities, such as when Pau Tsu leaves home like an American woman to assert her right to be Chinese. Finally, *Mrs. Spring Fragrance's* characters traverse their local communities to become more Chinese as Pan does after withdrawing from the traitorous white world. Most importantly, all of Sui Sin Far's characters use local motion to resist stereotypes about the Chinese community and to generate identities more suitable to their complex cultural needs.

Even as the characters refute collective stereotypes, their local perambulations affirm individual identities. While Sui Sin Far often blurs the lines between a communal and individual identity, it is clear that she (more than other regionalists whom I discuss in other chapters) articulates her characters' subjectivity (Duvall 247). Part of this interest may stem from writing in the midst of modernism that stressed characters' psychological

development. However, Sui Sin Far also had to contend with the conventions of late-nineteenth century regionalism that looked for communal (instead of individual) solutions to inequity (Hsu, "New" 232). While the previous section focused on *Mrs. Spring Fragrance's* resistance to reductive collective cultural categories, the following section illustrates how Sui Sin Far's characters use local motion to define themselves as individuals.

### **Moving Towards Selfhood in *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* and Regionalist Literature**

As ethical readers who aim to avoid oppressive analysis, we must acknowledge that turn-of-the-century readers often saw regional characters as foreigners who existed spatially and ethnically apart from the dominant society. According to Donna Campbell, regional inhabitants easily drifted into the realm of "characters" who did "not share the implied audience's sophistication, geographic location, or even ways of speaking" (*Resisting*, 11). Instead of persons with psychological depth, readers saw literary regional figures as "personifications of the different humanity produced in such non-modern cultural settings" (Brodhead 116). While twentieth-century regionalism gave "hyphenated Americans" a space to articulate their "languages, folk customs, humor, music, and beliefs," these characters were also interpreted as un-American (Fisher 174). In short, readers of regionalist writing often labeled local characters as primitive caricatures of a non-normative population. Sui Sin Far's modernist emphasis on individual identities subverts the desire to read regional communities as collectively foreign.<sup>vii</sup>

While today's critics ordinarily view regionalism as a genre about communities, modernism developed an interest in the individual identity, thus complicating the possibility of a "modernist regionalism" that could balance a collective consciousness with matters of the inner mind (Jordan 78). When works such as *Winesburg, Ohio* by Sherwood Anderson did delve into characters' psychological interiority, they used the regional space to represent an uncompassionate and "unjust centralized society" that left its members feeling socially alienated (Jordan 54). Sui Sin Far's stories blend a community-oriented regionalism and an individually-focused modernism, refuting scholarly assumptions about their oppositional nature. Contrary to other modernists who used the local community to represent social isolation, Sui Sin Far uses the local community to delineate her characters (paradoxically) as individuals. In the following section, I begin by showing how some of *Mrs. Spring Fragrance's* characters illustrate the larger nation's tendency to essentialize Chinese people. Then I show Sui Sin Far's use of modernist narrative techniques to create her characters' interiority. By giving her characters psychological depth, she further establishes them as complex individuals, not the caricaturized foreign Other. Finally, similar to my analysis of the characters in *Ramona*, I offer several examples of how Sui Sin Far's characters use mobility to identify with cultural groups, thus establishing themselves as agents of their own identity.

In "The Wisdom of the New" and "Its Wavering Image" several characters do not view the Chinese as capable of subjectivity. In "The Wisdom of the New," Adah Carlton asks her aunt if the Chinese women regret having to live apart from their spouses until their husbands can bring them to the U.S. Mrs. Dean replies, "It is dreadful to our minds,

but not to theirs. Everything with them is a matter of duty" (64). Even though the author depicts Mrs. Dean as an ally of Wou Sankwei and other Chinese immigrants, her response implies that the Chinese have no thoughts or emotions other than those pertaining to duty. Wou Sankwei, even though he is Chinese, also perpetuates the idea that his people lack psychological complexity. When Adah asks him his wife's opinion on American schooling, Sankwei says that an American woman might think about such a matter, "but not a Chinese" (66). Sankwei's comment can mean that Chinese women do not like to voice their opinions. However, it is likely that he sees his wife as incapable of having her own thoughts. When Sankwei sees his wife as a mere caricature, Adah restores Pau Lin's interiority. She tells her aunt, "a woman is a woman with intuitions and perceptions, whether Chinese or American" (72). Fortunately, characters such as Adah remind readers that the Chinese do have "intuitions and perceptions." However, characters like Adah are not in the majority.

More often, readers see characters such as Mark Carson from "Its Wavering Image" who negate Chinese and Chinese Americans' right to complex identities. The narrator tells us that Pan was "all unconscious until his coming, she had lived her life alone" and readers perceive that Mark really does view Pan as a non-subject until she learns how to be culturally white (81). Mark later tells Pan that her Chinese friends and family do not understand her: "your real self is alien to them" (82). According to Mark, Pan's "real" sense of self goes undetected within the Chinese community and needs white culture to make it legible. He does not notice that long before his arrival, Pan connected with the Asian community and moved fluidly through Chinatown. Like many Anglo

Americans, Mark refuses to recognize that Pan possesses a complex identity outside of the limited racial categories available to her. He tells her, "Pan, don't you see that you have got to decide what you will be--Chinese or white? You cannot be both" (83). Pan finally succumbs to the absolute cultural divide between white and Chinese cultures when she disassociates entirely with the white community.

Pan's choice to abandon her biracial identity and her connections to whites contradicts the flattened identity of abject Other that many Americans applied to the Chinese at the turn of the century. Instead of being simply exotic, she is a thinking, intuitive, individual who chooses with whom to identify. Like Pan, many of Sui Sin Far's other characters demonstrate a conscious awareness of the right to establish identities that resist stereotypes. Although the author only attributes a "mental portfolio" (as in her autobiographical essay) to Mermei in "The Chinese Lily" (130), many of her characters demonstrate subjectivity by contemplating their identities in crisis.

To accomplish this consciousness, Sui Sin Far employs the modernist technique of free indirect discourse. Rather than use a narrator to reveal the characters' thoughts, Sui Sin Far lets the characters speak for themselves. For example, when Mr. Spring Fragrance expresses concern about his wife's increasingly American behaviors, he asks, "was the making of American fudge sufficient reason for a wife to wish to remain a week longer in a city where her husband was not?" (41). Without a narrator, the reader has instant access to Mr. Spring Fragrance's thoughts as he contemplates the potential dangers Americanization will bring to his relationship. Similarly, as Mrs. Spring Fragrance thinks about her book, she reflects, "many American women wrote books.

Why should not a Chinese?" (47). Here we see another example of a character whose thoughts about her cultural identity surface without the narrator's intervention. Finally, in "The Americanizing of Pau Tsu," even though Pau Tsu does not speak openly about her concerns with assimilation, her mind is occupied. She wonders, "was it necessary to receive visitors nearly every evening?...and why, oh! why should she be constrained to eat her food with clumsy, murderous looking American implements instead of her own elegant and easily manipulated ivory chopsticks?" (114). Through free indirect discourse, Sui Sin Far shows her characters' "mental portfolio" that shapes their identities.

However, Sui Sin Far's characters do not merely contemplate their identities; many utilize mobility to actively identify with or reject certain communities. Sometimes, the characters align themselves with American culture and sometimes they do not. However, if the characters refuse assimilation, they do so by choice, not because they are incapable of becoming American. Finally, some characters defy existing categories entirely by opting for a multicultural identity that destabilizes the limited options for subjectivity available to Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans.

In "Lin John," and "The Sing Song Woman," both heroines claim their own identities by affiliating with white culture. In "Lin John," Pau Sang's brother works tirelessly for years to earn enough money to send his sister back to China. However, she refuses mobility when she uses the money for American clothing. She acknowledges that she does not want to move back to China because she desires the luxuries and lifestyle of other kept American women: "Lin John meant well, but he knows little. As to me, I wanted a sealskin sacque like the fine American ladies" (152). In "The Sing Song

Woman,” Mag-gee performs a similar act of deceit by allowing the Sing Song Woman to pretend to be her in an arranged marriage to a Chinese man. Mag-gee then runs away with her American lover, asserting that “I was born in America, and I’m not Chinese in looks nor in any other way. See! My eyes are blue, and there is gold in my hair; and I love potatoes and beef, and every time I eat rice it makes me sick” (159). One woman takes control of her identity by refusing to move; the other actively moves towards her desired culture. Both characters successfully acquire American identities, demonstrating that the Chinese are not so unassimilable after all.

Contrary to Pau Sang and Mag-gee, Pan in “Its Wavering Image” actively chooses a Chinese identity. After the traitorous Mark Carson sells Chinatown’s secrets, she declares: “I would not be a white woman for all the world. You are a white man. And what is a promise to a white man!” (85). Her walks with Carson both affirm her affiliation with the Chinese culture and help sever ties with whites when she sees Carson’s betrayal of the privileged mobility her community offers him. By maneuvering through her local community, she solidifies a cultural consciousness that refuses acculturation. Her mindful rejection of white culture shows that Chinese individuals are capable of assimilating, but many made the conscious choice not to.

In “Tian Shan’s Kindred Spirit,” the characters use movement first to disassociate with the existing white and Chinese Canadian community and then to identify as Chinese when they migrate to China. Tian Shan crosses international borders to become a smuggler and a “woodsman” who is not tied down to the fixed communities of the Chinese Canadians or Protestant missionaries (154). As his “kindred spirit,” Fin Fan’s



movements create a similar “independent and original” identity, embodying “outlawry even amongst her own countrywomen” (153). Showing her conscious refusal of white culture, she says to the missionaries, “I like learn talk and dress like you...but I not want think like you. Too much discuss” (153). When Fin Fan cross-dresses to escape to China with Tian Shan, her mobility distinguishes her from the Anglo culture and also from her Chinese-Canadian community that rejects her relationship with the free-spirited Tian Shan.

While some characters identify solely with the Chinese community and others with whites, many of Sui Sin Far’s characters use mobility to create identities that fall somewhere in between, challenging the “either/or” social categories to which the Chinese could belong. Mr. Spring Fragrance worries that by going to San Francisco, his wife will acquire the American tendency towards infidelity. After reading a letter from his friend who frequently sees Mrs. Spring Fragrance with Tsen Hing, Mr. Spring Fragrance fears that “if women are allowed to stray at will from under their husbands' mulberry roofs, what is to prevent them from becoming butterflies?” (41). In other words, he fears that Mrs. Spring Fragrance’s experiences away from home, might entice her to assume American behavioral traits. Fortunately for her husband, Mrs. Spring Fragrance’s travels solidify her identity as a Chinese American woman who respects her arranged marriage; she returns home more affectionate than ever. Her travels allow her to assume some aspects of an American identity while embracing the Chinese heritage that her marriage represents.

As with Mrs. Spring Fragrance, Pau Tsu from “The Americanizing of Pau Tsu” also uses mobility to develop a hybridized American/Chinese identity. Despite her desire to remain in her home decorated with Chinese artifacts, her husband forces her to become an American woman who goes on walks and receives visitors. Pau Tsu despises her husband’s cultural imperialism and leaves home to “obtain a divorce, as is the custom in America” (118). The action performs an American identity on the surface while subtly reinforcing her right to be Chinese. Pau Tsu’s husband learns to respect her Chinese identity only when she threatens an “American divorce.”

Through localmotion, Sui Sin Far’s characters do not let outside forces dictate their identities as Chinese, Americans, or Chinese-Americans. Even though immigration laws saw the Chinese as unassimilable (and therefore un-American) or permanently Othered as Chinese, the characters employ a localized mobility that ironically upholds the American myth of one’s right to self-determination. On a smaller scale, by emphasizing individual identity, her stories also stress one’s right to belong to a local culture despite the denial of a national identity. Sui Sin Far’s work essentially shows us that while we should recognize the potential essentializing dangers or “regionalizing” ethnic figures, localmotion can help sustain an identity within an oppressive system that wants to eradicate cultural difference.

### **Looking Backward**

Sui Sin Far’s collection is the perfect text to conclude an analysis of mobility in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century regionalist literature because it funnels all of the issues from previous chapters into a single collection. Published after the high

regionalism of the 1890s, the text demonstrates continuity in issues of local mobility that Jewett, Jackson, and Elliott's works raise. However, it also shows new regionalist trends stemming from a modernist interest in individualism. *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*'s structure helps it bridge the communalism of nineteenth-century's high regionalism and the individualism of twentieth-century modernism. Elizabeth Ammons argues that *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* "constantly shifts its focus rather than concentrate in depth on one individual's experience" (*Conflicting* 116); as a collection of short stories, the author does not have the same amount of textual space to develop the characters' identities as in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, *Ramona*, and *The Durket Sperret*. Nonetheless, we should not assume that such identities are absent and that the characters are incapable of constructing selfhood through mobility. In fact, the short stories might even allow *greater* individual development than the novels since each character has his or her own textual space (even if only a few pages) to enunciate a unique identity. In Sui Sin Far's stories, the characters almost all experience some degree of an identity crisis that sustains the plot, and they all seek resolution to this crisis. In some cases, the crisis is resolved, as in "The Americanizing of Pau Tsu," in which Pau Tsu can finally live as a Chinese woman. In other cases, the crisis remains, as with the narrator in "Her Chinese Husband: Sequel to the Story of the White Woman Who Married a Chinese," who wonders how her biracial children will survive in such a racist world. However, nearly all of the stories in the beginning of the collection show an individual's trajectory of development.

As a work of twentieth-century regionalism, Sui Sin Far's stories describe individuals, but they also emphasize high regionalism's interest in the "narratives of

community" that Sandra Zagarell sees as integral to the genre. Certainly, collecting the stories in one volume after publishing them individually speaks to Sui Sin Far's desire to group individual voices together (Ammons, *Conflicting* 117). However, regionalism's focus on community has caused critics to label regionalist texts as "inferior" to those that demonstrate Aristotle's tripartite plot in which a single character exhibits the quest for self-actualization (Murfin and Ray 287). Sui Sin Far's collection destabilizes this marginalization of regionalist texts by showing how they address both individual and collective identities. Furthermore, her stories about individual subjectivity demonstrate how interest in the individual might have slipped beneath regionalist scholars' critical radar.

Although Marjorie Pryse labels the narrator of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* as a person on a quest who "is looking for something...[and] does not know in advance what she will find," few other critics note the narrator's individual growth (Introduction xi). However, Jewett's novel is indeed the story of the narrator's evolution as she becomes part of the town. We might miss her development because it is not one of overt "cause-and-effect," but rather one in which she becomes "immersed into landscape, background, and tradition" of the community (Rhode 231). Still, this trajectory appears when the narrator finds belonging and a sense of inner peace apart from her chaotic urban home.

Investigating Sui Sin Far's interest in individualism with regards to Jackson's novel, allows a different type of subjectivity to surface. Contrary to the narrator's identity in *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, which depends on companionship and acceptance,

Ramona's identity develops from of exile. It is no coincidence that *Ramona* and *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* both address the theme of expulsion as texts published in the time of "Chinese Exclusion, the anti-tribal Dawes Act, the rise of Jim Crow segregation and disfranchisement, the emergence of the literacy test and other proposals to curb non-Nordic immigration, [and] resurgent anti-Catholicism" (R. Smith 348). In short, the two texts surfaced during eras of anxiety about who could claim U.S. soil and citizenship. In both *Ramona* and *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*, the characters substantiate multicultural identities that the U.S. government wanted to deny. Ramona uses travel to affirm her identity as a Native American raised in a Mexican household. Her mobility shows that even without tribal soil, she can still claim an Indian identity by interacting with members of Alessandro's tribe. Similarly, Mrs. Spring Fragrance's travels along the West Coast enable an identity that is simultaneously American and Chinese, contradicting immigration laws that would label her as unquestionably Chinese. In both texts, the characters move to defy national rhetoric that labeled them as non-subjects.

Another way that *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* unites individualism and communalism is by highlighting how diverse communities sustain individualism. Elizabeth Ammons argues that Sui Sin Far utilized the short story structure to show a "variety of Chinese American experiences and issues" (*Conflicting* 117). By creating a multifaceted community of many voices, Sui Sin Far makes it difficult for Americans to place monolithic labels on the Chinese-Chinese American community. When we seek the individual voices that surface from supposedly homogenous regional communities, we can articulate alternate readings of local characters. For example, instead of reading

Captain Littlepage's oddities in Jewett's novel as symptomatic of the failing shipping industry, we can see him as an eccentric individual who dreams of mythic communities. Rather than read Elijah Tilley as a representation of the community's inability to move forward, we understand his genuine grief at his wife's departure. In Sarah Barnwell Elliott's novel, once we embrace the region's economic diversity, we appreciate Hannah's individual development as a character who endures a chaotic journey through different social classes. While Hannah does not exhibit the same psychological depth of Sui Sin Far's characters, her travels nonetheless indicate the emotional ramifications of abject poverty, class conflict, and obsession with social status. Sui Sin Far's stories suggest that beyond seeking how regionalist texts defy homogeneity, we need to understand how such diversity generates personal identities.

When reading regional characters as individuals rather than as members of a homogeneous collective, readers can perceive how their behaviors generate varied performances of social categories such as gender. Under this lens, new interpretations develop of why and how turn-of-the-century females moved. First, as I mention in the introduction, contrary to late nineteenth-century American society that saw female mobility as a "danger to the stability of social and familial order," this project's mobile women do not always move to threaten earlier nineteenth-century tenets of womanhood (Parkins 2). Rather, they want to individualize the characteristics of purity, domesticity, piety and submission that Barbara Welter claims define the true American woman. In "The Americanization of Pau Tsu," the protagonist does not object to domesticity; she just wants the right to be domestic as a Chinese woman, not as an American. Similarly,

Ramona never abandons her desire to create a happy home for her husband and her children; like Pau Tsu, she just wants to do so free from the harassment of Anglo interlopers. In a different manner, Hannah from *The Durket Sperret* profits from her domestic talents, merging the private sphere with the public market.

When the female characters of *The Path She Had Chosen* move, they also reinvent the historical connection between women and tradition. Nineteenth-century American society saw women as responsible for passing on values and traditions to the next generation (Parkins 3). People of this time feared women moving into more modern roles, lest they lose this connection to the past. Nonetheless, as I mention in the chapter on *Ramona*, regionalist texts were not as interested in the past as critics have claimed. Nor are the female characters of these texts always burdened with maintaining traditional values as we see with *The Country of the Pointed Firs*' narrator who claims a modern career as a writer. However, more than simply refuting stereotypes, Sui Sin Far's emphasis on individualism illustrates how regional characters individualize gender norms.

While many of the female characters in this project resist the responsibility of passing on traditional values, others do not. Sui Sin Far's Mrs. Spring Fragrance leaves home to see San Francisco, emulating the New Woman's mobility, but she returns to her traditionally arranged marriage, happier than ever to see her husband. The narrator in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* moves beyond her urban landscape, but she still carries on the tradition of storytelling so central to Dunnet Landing's feminine culture (Zagarell, "Country's Portrayal" 48). Even after leaving home, Ramona passes on her Catholic

heritage by decorating her house with a statue of the Madonna and rosaries. The shrine becomes a site of prayer for the whole village (268). Finally, in *The Durket Sperett*, Hannah uses mobility to experience the more modern lifestyle of the nouveau riche, while she ultimately returns to the traditional agrarian lifestyle when she marries Dock Wilson. These women are not nostalgic for the past; they just want to mix modern mobility with their traditional values.

When the female characters of this project travel, they complicate mid-nineteenth-century ideals of femininity as well as conceptions of the New Woman's mobility. Wendy Parkins asserts that while many white, affluent women gained access to mobility at the turn of the century, their mobility "has seemed, at times, to consist entirely of shopping expeditions and city outings" (9). Presumably, when women challenged social norms by moving outside of the home, they did so for pleasure and to exhibit wealth. The mobility of the female characters in this study proves this stereotype untrue. Their inconsistent movement resists easy generalizations; much in the same way Sui Sin Far's stories refute marginalizing mindsets about the Chinese, Elliott's novel challenges stereotypes about Appalachians, Jackson's work destabilizes assumptions about Native Americans, and Jewett's text resists totalizing myths about the rural coastal community. Instead of traveling for leisurely shopping trips, these characters move to follow love such as Fin Fan in "Tian Shan's Kindred Spirit" and Tie Co in "The Smuggling of Tie Co."

Characters such as the narrator in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* and Mrs. Spring Fragrance journey to visit family. Sometimes, the stakes are higher and the



characters travel to unite or preserve families: Ramona seeks a place where she can raise her family, and Lae Choo "In the Land of the Free" immigrates to the U.S. so that her family can be together. Some characters such as Mrs. Todd and Hannah become mobile for economic reasons. Mrs. Todd needs to find herbs to sell and Hannah needs to peddle goods for her family's survival. Finally, some characters move not for the pleasure of shopping, but for the satisfaction and independence of a career outside of the home. Both the narrator of Jewett's novel and Mrs. Spring Fragrance in "The Inferior Woman" leave home to become writers while Hannah departs from the Lost Cove to work as Agnes's domestic servant.

By displaying multiple causes for movement, these characters resist neat categories that define the late nineteenth-century and the early twentieth-century female. Instead, they singularize their movement to fulfill their familial, economic, and personal needs. As individuals who become mobile for different reasons, these female characters show that regionalist texts are not just about communities; they are also about the unique personalities that compose these cultures. Analyzing the many reasons for female mobility can help counteract the critical marginalization that literary regionalism has suffered as a genre that supposedly privileges the community at the individual's expense. This balance between the individual and the larger community is important to conceptualize, especially for twenty-first century readers seeking balance between individual, local, and global identities.

### **Sui Sin Far, the Local Cosmopolitan**

Coupled with her depictions of immigrant characters, Sui Sin Far's worldwide travels enable a connection to "contemporary problems of transnationalism, racial hybridity, and cultural pluralism" (Hsu, Introduction 23). Her autobiographical writing also points readers towards a global cosmopolitanism saying, "only when the whole world becomes as one family will human beings be able to see clearly and hear distinctly" ("Leaves" 226). However, readers of "Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian" should not think that the author privileges globalism over local affiliations. Careful readers will note that immediately after Sui Sin Far speaks of the global community in "Leaves," she quickly transitions back to a localized identity when someone accuses her of "walking with a Chinaman" (226-227). To this critique, she responds "Not right to walk with one of my mother's people? Oh, indeed!" as if she finds the idea of isolating herself from her local community ridiculous. Moving through this community with its Chinese inhabitants is what connects Sui Sin Far to her "mother's people" ("Leaves" 227). The author does not have to go to China to find this link; she understands that even when one cannot move internationally, she can find an international identity in the local.

Sui Sin Far addresses border crossings when she positions herself as the arms that stretch between the West and the East ("Leaves" 233). Within *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*, however, there is also evidence of how problems develop when geographic, cultural, and ethnic borders remain intact, such as when racist nineteenth-century immigration legislation refused to allow Chinese and Chinese Americans to enter the U.S. Sui Sin

Far's work leaves us with a sense of contradiction. On the one hand, her texts privilege the hybridized, global, and cosmopolitan figure, and on the other hand, she shows how this identity cannot exist universally; her characters turn to a local identity when they cannot be multinational and boundaries are reinforced, not deconstructed.

Although Sui Sin Far writes of individual identities, her simultaneous construction and destabilization of borders extends to regional cultures as well. My previous chapters have noted how, contrary to what critics have argued, regions (and regionalist texts) are not fixed; these four writers cross boundaries of demographics, geography, culture, and even temporality. Yet the works by Jewett, Jackson, Elliott, and Sui Sin Far also depict real social issues pertaining to race, class, gender, ethnicity, and community that relate to the regions and historical moments in which these authors wrote. So how do we resolve the texts' desire for a global resistance to fixity and a distinctly local identity? The regionalist works considered in this project embrace this conundrum and use representations of mobility to resolve these contradictory impulses. As I explain in the conclusion, late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century women regionalists were far ahead of their time in their employment of textual mobility. Their texts indicate how movement enables regional inhabitants to push against physical, cultural, and temporal boundaries as characters travel locally, nationally, and internationally. However, the authors also highlight how mobility can unite a regional community, strengthening the bonds between its residents and affirming their connection to the inhabited space. Through movement, the regional characters learn to balance local and global identities.

## Notes

<sup>i</sup>. While entertaining, the children's stories primarily aim to teach morals and explain the mysteries of the world (Ammons, *Conflicting* 109); they do not necessarily exhibit the "more complicated moral contours" that come with understanding identities in crisis (Ammons, *Conflicting* 109). The stories are not the most useful for depicting how characters move through specific local settings since they are often occur in the nebulous terrains of "the fairy tale, the animal fable, the biblical parable...[and] the unrestricted fantasy world of the carnival" in which locations are ambiguous rather than concrete (White-Parks 214).

<sup>ii</sup>. Ironically, utilizing Chinese labor to build the transcontinental railroad did not lead to increased mobility for this population, but rather immobility (Wong 125). The Chinese workers were noticeably absent from the 1869 Golden Spike ceremony held to celebrate the railroad's completion. Furthermore, after finishing the railroad, many Chinese were driven out of their settlements and confined to urban Chinatowns (Wong 125).

<sup>iii</sup>. Although Sui Sin Far did rely on international travel to generate a bicultural identity, her hybridity was also a product of the publishing industry who "managed both to link the writer to Orientalism and to show her as Anglicized and successful" (White-Parks 200). Sui Sin Far was in the interesting position of having to appear white to relate to her Anglo readers, but also Chinese to speak with authority in writing about this marginalized population.

<sup>iv</sup>. While Pau Lin sees herself as Wou Sankwei's "accessory" and Adah Carlton as the ideal woman, it is important to note that Adah 's upper-class status would not have

rendered her immune to "accessory" status. According to Thorstein Veblen's theories on social economics, the upper-class Adahs are necessary to perform life's "uneventful drudgery" while those more capable of the "manly arts of war" seek access to the commodified goods that designate an elite status (Veblen, "Instinct" 200).

<sup>v.</sup> Ascribing greater mobility to lower-class women than upper-class women is a long-standing tradition in working-class scholarship. Illustrating this trend, Janet Zandy notes that many working-class women left "the privacy of home and kin" to unite with other working woman "as a means of collectively resisting class oppression" (6).

<sup>vi.</sup> For more information on how Sui Sin Far's short stories privilege a middle and upper-class perspective, see Sean McCann's article, "The Connecting Links: The Anti-Progressivism of Sui Sin Far."

<sup>vii.</sup> When describing Sui Sin Far's interest in the human psyche, John Duvall compares the author to modernist African American writers who depicted characters struggling with the Du Boisian double consciousness, concretely positioning Sui Sin Far as a modernist author (247). However, my argument differs from Duvall's because I argue that Sui Sin Far merged an interest in communal identities with a focus on individual identity.

## CHAPTER VI

### REGIONAL MOBILITY IN A GLOBAL WORLD

I would like to turn from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to a more contemporary phenomenon--bumper stickers. While seemingly unconnected to my earlier discussion, modern bumper stickers actually relate to turn-of-the-century regionalists' depictions of social issues. As I wander the decks of a crowded university parking lot, I notice that student and faculty vehicles boast many stickers. A striking contradiction appears. Many say "Buy Local" and "Support Local Organic Farmers." Some merely display the university's name in various fonts. One depicts the outline of North Carolina with a heart in the center. All reveal the vehicle owner's pride in his or her community and implore the appreciation of local resources. In contrast, other bumper stickers promote global citizenry and cultural pluralism, bearing clever mantras such as "Give Whirled Peas a Chance," "Earthlings Unite," "Coexist" (spelled with letters composed of different religious symbols) and the popular "E" for equality symbol. From a glance, the university appears divided in its support for local and global causes. These conflicting bumper stickers illustrate a dilemma facing contemporary scholars--how to reconcile seemingly oppositional local and global identities?<sup>i</sup>

I argue that regionalist texts from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century ask the same question. Jewett, Jackson, Elliott, and Sui Sin Far all use regionalism to

articulate concerns about pressing social issues that shaped the communities these writers inhabited. Jewett writes about a New England shipping region that outsiders doomed to economic decline. Jackson's depictions of mistreated Native Americans stem from her stint in Southern California as Special Commissioner of Indian Affairs. As a wealthy aristocrat and later an impoverished mountaineer, Elliott had first-hand experience with the complexities of Appalachia's economy; Sui Sin Far closely observed the plight of her fellow Chinese Americans in a sinophobic society. Nevertheless, as I have shown, these texts speak to contemporary aspects of globalization. Jewett's novel depicts geographically flexible and demographically heterogeneous local spaces that might be mistaken for cosmopolitan locations. Jackson's text troubles the use of space to authenticate a cultural identity. Elliott's novel affirms Jewett's resistance to regional homogeneity and further illustrates the region's connection to national and global economic systems. Sui Sin Far's stories rely on local affiliation to validate personal and communal identities that are paradoxically transnational. With their refutation of geographic boundaries, cultural isolation, and authenticity, these writers engage with issues of globalization and cosmopolitanism.<sup>ii</sup> More importantly, their texts show how mobility allows for a local identity to exist in conjunction with a more global sense of self.

Today's critics question the role of a local identity in an "increasingly postmodern 'Planet Reebok' world full of convenience, mobility, and postindustrial economies that run on global flows of information and capital" (Kowalewski 8). However, Jewett, Jackson, Elliott, and Sui Sin Far's texts show that a modern mobility facilitates, rather

than precludes, a local identity. Such works' reliance on mobility demonstrates that we do not have to see the bumper stickers on student and faculty vehicles as contradictory. Instead, these texts ask us to look at the placement of these stickers and acknowledge the significance of their attachment to mobile entities. The mere act of moving through spaces forces people to interact with local surroundings. We feel our feet touching the pavement and we sense the wheels making contact with the ground. These sensations connect us with the immediate community, even if just on the sensory level. Nonetheless, these same feet and wheels give us the freedom to transgress local boundaries, travel to faraway places, and interact with people outside of our communities. In short, movement affirms local connections while giving us the power to go global.

### **Uniting the Local and the Global**

One bumper stick in particular best exemplifies the convergence of local and global spheres, enjoining other drivers to “act locally, think globally.” Businesses, academics, and grass roots activists have all utilized this mantra. Even my alma mater displayed the words on various banners all over campus to inspire its students to sustain a local consciousness when working for global change and vice versa. Today’s organizations that want to change the world must begin within local communities. Take Habitat for Humanity—the organization describes itself as a “true world leader in addressing the issues of poverty housing.” The program strives to ameliorate the global housing crisis, but focuses on the relatively local task of building houses for specific families in impoverished communities. Conversely, with the proliferation of diasporas,



migration, and commuter communities, political outcomes “are shaped by transnational communities even when the results are focused on a particular location” (Lyons and Mandaville 125). To return to Habitat for Humanity, one could easily learn from their website how to housing donate materials. These goods will help members of a local community, but such a donation would not have taken place without access to the World Wide Web. Even as early as the late nineteenth century, the authors in this study understood the need to “act locally, think globally” with their regionalist writing.

However, contemporary critics often ignore the genre’s ability to balance these two oppositional forces; instead, they see regionalism as subverting an increasingly global, cosmopolitan world. Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse argue that regionalist texts depict local spaces as “potential sites of resistance to the postcolonial encroachments of globalization” (*Writing* 234), while David Jordan concludes that the texts offer “opposition to the prevailing tendency toward cosmopolitanism” (xii). Instead of affirming globalization, regionalists wrote “as chroniclers who valued tradition and found in the isolated villages exactly what they sought there: human nature in a less mechanized, hence simpler state” (Campbell, *Resisting* 8). While seeing small-town cultures preserved in print may have ameliorated anxieties about the developing world, positioning regionalism as a salve for the industrial world’s angst ultimately reinforces many myths that these four regionalist texts dismantle.

Separating the regional from the global means rendering local spaces (and the genre of regionalism) incapable of growth. However, the authors of this study know that their communities cannot avoid the changes that come with an increasingly global

society. In Jewett's world, Dunnet Landing will die out if it does not modify its seafaring economy to suit the needs of a railroad-obsessed nation. Significantly, instead of communal death, we see a lively social network that maintains its energy through trips to visit friends, journeys to family gatherings and memories of international travel. In Jackson's novel, Ramona tries to stop the social changes that Anglo interlopers bring, but she cannot; no amount of negotiation will impede these settlers and preserve her land. Making the region unchangeable means ignoring Jackson's pointed critique against the imperialists who enact such devastating change. Elliott's novel clearly demonstrates that regions are not immune to larger social issues when her characters reveal unstable class systems similar to those of the industrializing nation. Sui Sin Far's characters grow as individuals, but the community itself experiences newness when outsiders alter existing cultures and demographics.

Seeking timelessness in regionalist works means that the genre becomes a place where scholars go "for a nap" (Limerick 83-84). However, this project's texts are anything but sleep-inducing in their depiction of vibrant communities. Jewett's Dunnet Landing is a highly mobile community consisting of world-traveled seamen, friendly widows, people who claim to have found transcendent communities, storytellers, and travelers. Elliott's *Lost Cove* and *Sewanee* come alive when Hannah's journeys between town and country reveal their economic diversity. Furthermore, when Sui Sin Far's characters maneuver through local spaces such as Chinatown, they do not find stultifying cultural uniformity. Rather, they discover a rich diversity that allows them to sustain

flexible identities as Chinese, Chinese Americans, and Americans. By relegating regional spaces to progress's Other, we miss the vibrancy of these exciting communities.

Finally, we cannot separate the local from the global in regionalist writing because such a divide obscures how these texts address “big picture” issues that affect global, national, and local communities alike. Similar to Habitat for Humanity’s interest in working locally to serve a larger “humanity,” the female writers of this project use their texts about local spaces to address broad social concerns. In *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, the narrator's motivation for her Dunnet Landing trip becomes more understandable in light of her larger desire to escape the industrial, urban world. *Ramona's* depiction of the heroine's romance with a Native American becomes more meaningful juxtaposed with the government-sanctioned mistreatment of Native peoples. Hannah Warren's choice to peddle goods gains social significance when readers see her counteracting gender norms that limited female mobility to the domestic realm. Finally, movement in Sui Sin Far's *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* becomes more than just a resolution for individual identity crises when evaluated in light of global migration patterns. Sui Sin Far's characters develop their individual identities, but also represent the plight of the transnational migrant. Each text shows that local issues cannot be understood outside of a larger national or global context. Ultimately, my interpretation of regionalism argues for its depiction of lively communities that embrace rather than resist social change and its facilitation of culturally plural identities. Regionalist works do not dichotomize the local and the global; they reject absolute, arbitrary, and unnatural divides that label regions as the anti-global Other.

## **Distinguishing the Local and the Global**

Heralding regionalism's ability to blur the boundaries between local and global identities begs the question, what will stop regions from becoming amorphous, unbounded extensions of the global community? In other words, when will the region break down as an identifier? Arjun Appadurai argues that in today's global world, "translocalities" such as "border zones, tourist zones, refugee camps, and neighborhoods of exiles or expatriates" are becoming more prevalent (44). These are sites of vast mobility and cultural transfer. Ostensibly these sites represent the "new" region of the global village. However, upon close reflection, local influences ensure that these regions will not become homogeneous. Ein el-Helweh, a permanent Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon, has a different demographic composition and political history than Buduhuram, a Liberian refugee camp in Ghana. The conflicts dividing North and South Korea along the Korean Demilitarized zone are vastly different from those separating the United States and Mexico along the Rio Grande. Even if these regions are translocal with their itinerant inhabitants, they still possess unique histories, populations, and cultures. Jewett, Jackson, Elliott, and Sui Sin Far understood the value of cultural distinction, even in places that might be labeled as generic translocalities; their works affirm that we must proceed with caution when blurring the lines between small communities and the larger world, lest we unintentionally relegate the unique regional community to the cosmopolitan hegemony of a worldwide society. To understand why Jewett, Jackson, Elliott, and Sui Sin Far might have expressed reservations about a monolithic globalism, we must assess the historical moments in which these authors wrote.

In the mid nineteenth century, American industrialists and legislative representatives encouraged immigration to provide the labor for Western settlement (Dowling 359). However, as opportunities to work for railroads or settlement companies diminished, Americans became increasingly anxious about the growing immigrant populations (Dowling 359). John Higham argues that late nineteenth-century America experienced a heightened sense of nationalism for three main reasons. First, the postbellum Protestant reform movements elevated anti-Catholic, anti-Irish sentiments (29). Secondly, as labor unrest grew, industrialist began to fear foreigners as possible Marxist revolutionaries who would fuel anti-Capitalist riots (30). Finally, the rising interest in Darwinism meant a renewed interest in American Anglo-Saxon lineage (32).

America's fear of the foreign did not diminish in the early twentieth century. Russia's ongoing revolution and the rise of fascism in Europe made the U.S. hesitant to intervene in foreign affairs (Giles 379). Post World War I, President Theodore Roosevelt declared that "we must...have but one language. That must be the language of the Declaration of Independence" (qtd. in Giles 378). Roosevelt's push to return to Founding Fathers' values rather than embrace new languages and cultures demonstrates fear of globalism and the desire for cultural insularity. Just five years after Sui Sin Far published *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*, in which she issues a scathing critique of the country's xenophobia, the country declined to join the League of Nations, separating itself from a rapidly changing world (Giles 379). Despite how Jewett, Jackson, Elliott, and Sui Sin Far blur geographic, economic, and cultural boundaries, these women also wrote for an audience that would have felt discomfort about the obliteration of cultural divides.

Advocating absolute cultural pluralism would have compromised their texts' popularity and alienated the audience they wished to reform.

While the texts that I discuss resist cultural isolation, they also paradoxically resist globalizing forces that detract from local interests. By focusing on social issues such as the communal bonding of a small New England town, the injustice of stolen Native land, stereotypes of Appalachians, and the social exclusion of Chinese Americans, these texts speak to issues that are specific to the communities from which they originate. Late nineteenth and early twentieth-century regionalist texts demonstrate that contrary to current scholars who advocate for the global region, we must be careful about making local spaces a microcosm of the larger world.

In the past decade, contemporary scholarship has started sublimating the genre “into the often seemingly locale-less interdisciplinary concept known as globalization, which generally espouses the vision of a borderless world dominated by multinationals and markets, vanguards of a homogenized culture ” (Clabough 10). Hsuan Hsu argues that “nativists, environmentalists, suburban gated communities, tourism boosters, and progressive cultural critics” must think about their local spaces as elements of a “global village” (*Geography* 164). Tom Lutz sees this “interconnectedness” of local color as absolutely necessary if we are to become “alive to the multiplicity of meaning” that regions embody, rather than limiting our focus to small-scale concerns (57).

While the texts under consideration do value “interconnectedness” over isolation and fixity, they also resist an absolutely global worldview. They remind readers that regions are “a recognizable parcel of real-world geography,” as much as they are part of

the imagined worldwide community (Jordan 9). Losing local specificity means turning the region (and the text that writes about the region) into a "marshmallow in its structural firmness," causing "the region to melt away before one's eyes" (Limerick 96). The characters in this project show that the local will never entirely "melt away." Jewett's narrator might blur the lines of her urban/rural identity, but this act only occurs because of her movement through Mrs. Todd's secret pennyroyal site, her walk on Green Island with William, and her physical journey to the Bowden family reunion. *Ramona's* entire plot revolves around the heroine's inability to claim land for her family; conceptualizing her plight within the larger realm of the amorphous global village means missing the drama that sustains the novel and situates Jackson's critique of Anglo settlement. In *The Durket Sperret*, Hannah's physical residence in Appalachia establishes the economic stereotypes that her movement destabilizes. For *Mrs. Spring Fragrance's* characters, the physical spaces through which they move become important designators of social belonging. Even though many of the characters opt for a transcultural identity, they develop this global consciousness by moving through geographical spaces such as Chinatown. Without these local interactions, her characters might remain in the cultural no-man's-land of international migration.

Late nineteenth and early twentieth-century regionalist texts remind readers that even in a global age, we cannot forget the significance of physical movement through immediate spaces and real-life interactions with local people. It is by moving through these spaces that characters battle oppressive gender issues, the theft of Native land, class stereotypes, and sinophobia. The texts in *The Path She Had Chosen* remind us that we

must not collapse real local realities into a larger postmodern world of plural realities; doing so means negating the power of dominant systems that still influence regional communities and the ways that local mobility resists these systems.

Collapsing the regional into the global also implies a uniform desire for cultural pluralism and diversity, a desire some of the characters in these texts reject. They occasionally claim allegiance to a single culture rather than embrace the "ethos of representational inclusiveness" that cosmopolitanism espouses (Lutz 3). Ramona decides that she would rather be Indian than American. Elliott's protagonist marries the lower-class Dock Wilson, rejecting her trans-economic identity. Similarly, Pan in Sui Sin Far's "Its Wavering Image" concludes that she would rather be a Chinese than a traitorous American. These characters show that we cannot reduce the region to the cultural ambiguity of globalism, lest we deny these characters' affiliations with a single, non-global culture. While many of the regions traveled through are indeed heterogeneous and culturally diverse, we cannot assume that all local color entities desire cosmopolitanism's inclusivity.

Furthermore, while early twentieth-century regionalist Hamlin Garland touted regionalism's potential to sustain cultural diversity, not all of this project's characters seek difference over similarities.<sup>iii</sup> Sometimes characters such as Jewett's narrator, Jackson's Ramona, and Sui Sin Far's immigrants want belonging and shared local affiliations instead of multiplicity. Jewett's narrator spends a lot of time traveling with Dunnet Landing's residents to ensure her communal membership. Even through linguistic barriers, Ramona struggles to connect with Alessandro's people by showing empathy for



their condition and deference to their elders. In Sui Sin Far's "The Americanizing of Pau Tsu," Wan Lin Fo only wants to gain the Americans' acceptance, citing the motto: "When in Rome, do as the Romans do" (113). To assume that regional spaces and their inhabitants all desire cultural pluralism means missing the ways that local color texts caution readers against unrestrained world citizenship.

In the previous chapters, I argue that mobility helps characters such as Jewett's narrator understand the unbounded nature of regional borders. Yet even when seeking flexible borders, "one country cannot at the same time be another country" (Malkki 26); borders can be permeable, but they are somewhat necessary as "agents of cultural difference" (King xii). Although border zones, refugee camps, and expatriate communities are "translocalities," they also arise from conflicts between distinct geopolitical regions. A border zone can only exist when physical boundaries interact. Refugees and expatriates exist by definition as people who journey from one individual community to another. Distinguishable differences in spaces have to exist for the formation of translocalities. Jewett, Jackson, Elliott, and Sui Sin Far recognize how unique physical, cultural, and geographic boundaries shape their characters, especially when they use such differences to motivate their characters' mobility.

In *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, a divide between the urban world and the rural Dunnet Landing justifies the narrator's trip. After her time in the town, the narrator sees that the village is just as lively as the metropolis that she left, but this realization does not erase the original boundary that brought her to the community. In *Ramona*, boundaries between the U.S. and Mexico ensure that Ramona's international migration

offers a significant critique of a country that is inhospitable to Native persons. Without this divide, we cannot understand Mexico's moral superiority to the United States. In Sui Sin Far's stories, boundaries fundamentally shape the characters' identities. Anxiety about the Chinese crossing American borders perpetuates the sinophobic beliefs that oppress many of *Mrs. Spring Fragrance's* characters. Conversely, local boundaries create a safe place within which Sui Sin Far's characters can move to develop multiethnic identities denied at the national level. Thus, these novels and stories show that rather than eradicate boundaries that separate the regional from the global, readers should understand how some boundaries facilitate characters' development as individuals.

When we read regional figures as cosmopolitan, we assume that they have the power to move between cultures and geographic spaces. This assumption does not apply to all of the characters that I discuss. Ramona has to leave her home due to the Senora's intolerance for a mixed-race union. Unlike Ramona, Elliott's Hannah does have the agency at the beginning of the novel to move between the Lost Cove and the aristocratic Sewanee, but her family denies her this multi-class identity when they confine her in the cabin after hearing about her supposed relationship with Max. Finally, Sui Sin Far's characters often lack the privilege of a multi-ethnic identity, at least at the national level due to strict immigration legislation that limited their movement into American society. Thus, these characters show that a cosmopolitan identity is never inherently granted simply by asserting the cosmopolitan nature of regions. Instead, readers of regionalist works need to see the divide between the immediate community and the global community as an act of constant negotiation that mobility facilitates.

## **Balancing the Local and the Global through Movement**

In March of 2013, the *Washington Post* published an article entitled “Why Aren’t Americans Moving” that details possible reasons that the number of Americans relocating each year has significantly declined since the early nineties. The author attributes the fall in movement to an aging population, an increase in underwater mortgages, the high cost of moving and the decreased number of Americans switching jobs. Just a few months later, *Time* published an article entitled “The End of the Suburbs,” which explained the “New Urbanism” movement in which many Americans are moving from planned suburban communities back to an “urban core.” These urbanites want more walking, less driving, and access to the culture and dining opportunities city environments offer.

While seemingly oppositional in their observations about Americans’ mobility (are we moving or not?), these articles both indicate one profound truth—the study of human movement can be a fruitful framework for understanding culture. The first article indicates anxiety about a less mobile elderly population and a struggling economy. The second reveals a cultural phenomenon that challenges the suburban American dream. Analyzing mobility in the work of Jewett, Jackson, Elliott and Sui Sin Far reveals information about the cultural moment in which these authors lived, but this analysis also helps us understand the world today. More succinctly, through representations of mobility in regionalist texts, these authors demonstrate the possibility of achieving balance between a local and a global identity.

Regionalist works act as literary bridges that sustain and expand local identities. According to Michel Certeau, “the *bridge* is ambiguous everywhere: it alternately welds together and opposes insularities. It distinguishes them and threatens them” (128). Like bridges, regionalist texts create a spatial gap between the local community and the outside world. These works focus on local issues specific to smaller communities. Yet, bridges also link outsiders and local residents by facilitating movement into and away from specific spaces. Local color works parallel bridges by giving their characters the space to move locally and the agency to transcend geopolitical boundaries.

Looking at regionalism as a genre of bridges moves it away from the strict dichotomy of local versus global and refocuses scholarly attention on regionalist texts as sites of mobility. Even the words “mobilization” and “movement” have multiple meanings that speak to the interaction of the local and the global. On one hand, “to mobilize” means to unite people over a shared agenda that becomes a “movement.” With these definitions, the community becomes a collective force confronting a specific issue relevant to the movement’s members. This form of mobilization mirrors how Jewett, Jackson, Elliott, and Sui Sin Far’s texts call us to reflect upon local concerns, specifically social issues unique to their regional communities. On the other hand, “mobilization” and “movement” mean to prepare for travel and to cover distance, venturing from one geopolitical site to another. This form of mobility appears in regionalist texts when characters travel within, to, and away from multiple spaces. Thus, even semantically, movement conveys a dual interest in the local and the global.

In *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, the narrator knows that to connect with the community, she has to move through it. Yet this same mobility helps her see the town's unbounded borders and heterogeneous population. Ramona uses movement to mobilize as a Native American who suffers from Anglo settlement, but also to embrace cultural pluralism and a transnational identity when she moves to Mexico. Hannah in *The Durket Sperret* travels to engage with members of various classes. As she journeys from the Lost Cove to Sewanee, we see how others stereotype the poor Coveites based on their regional affiliation. Nonetheless, her movement reveals a society that is as socioeconomically diverse as the larger global community. Finally, Sui Sin Far's characters use their mobility to gain multicultural identities (we might even say global identities ) at the local level, even when officials deny them the right to travel internationally.

Local color texts by authors such as Jewett, Jackson, Elliott, and Sui Sin Far show that movement is more than simply traveling from one space to another. Analysis of mobility enables us to see how a group of texts resists monolithic assumptions about their ostensibly limited focus. Representations of movement in texts facilitate agency for marginalized individuals and sharpen literature's ability to critique unjust situations. Finally, reading for mobility in these texts under consideration demonstrates that the idea of thinking locally while acting globally is not just a bumper sticker, but a genuine possibility for today's readers.

## Notes

<sup>i.</sup> Homi K. Bhabha asks this question saying, "How do we *think* [about] this relation of locality whose every ebb and flow requires the re-inscription of global relations?" (40). Bhabha questions how our commitment to the local links us to a more global community (43).

<sup>ii.</sup> My definition of globalization is indebted to the work of Paul Giles who defines globalism as "a revolution in...technology that has made the transfer of ideas and commodities across national frontiers much easier, and which in turn has left the economies of nation-states more exposed to rapid transfers of global capital by transnational corporations and others" (373). To define cosmopolitanism, I rely on the work of Tom Lutz who defines it as "a politicized openness to experience" (47) and Martha Nussbaum whose definition is a bit lengthier. She explains that cosmopolitanism means that "we should not allow differences of nationality or class or ethnic membership or even gender to erect barriers between us and our fellow human beings. We should recognize humanity wherever it occurs" (7-8). While globalism is more of an economic phenomenon, cosmopolitanism relies heavily on discourses of interpersonal exchange. Thus, I recognize that the two concepts are not entirely synonymous. However, I use them in conjunction because the both speak to contemporary society's increasing discomfort with local boundaries that could potentially impede economic, cultural, and ethnic exchanges.

<sup>iii.</sup> Garland explains that regionalism captured readers' attention because of its exposure of non-normative lifestyles. He says it was popular because "it is the differences which

interest us; the similarities do not please, do not forever stimulate and feed as do the differences" (49).

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